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THE GREAT DAY



REV. T. GRAHAM, M.A.

THE GREAT DAY.

THE GREAT DAY;

NOTES AND COMMENTS

ON THE

BOOK OF REVELATION.

BY

THE REV. T. GRAHAM, M.A.

VICAR OF ST. PAUL'S, CANONBURY.

"Ask me of things to come concerning my sons."

ISAIAH xlvi. 11.

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PREFACE.

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THE following notes and comments were for the most part, prepared for a weekly Bible-reading on the Revelation. This accounts for occasional repetition, and for the conversational style which is frequently apparent. Some revision has been attempted, and some additions have been made; but, occupied with the work of a large London parish, I have not been able to find time for reconstruction. The reader is earnestly requested to read with his Bible before him, and to refer to the passages quoted; also to suspend his judgment upon the interpretation as a whole until the conclusion.

T. G.

October, 1884.

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

CHAPTER I.

4 John writeth his revelation to the seven churches of Asia, signified by the seven golden candlesticks. 7 The coming of Christ. 14 His glorious power and majesty.

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

4 JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death,

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

A

What John was

REVELATION, commanded to write

CHAPTER II.

What is commanded to be written to the angels, that is, the ministers of the churches of 1 Ephesus, 8 Smyrna, 12 Pergamos, 18 Thyatira: and what is commanded, or found wanting in them.

UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I *know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the

churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a

to the angels

CHAPTER III.

of the churches.

bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts : and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations :

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers : even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

CHAPTER III.

1 The angel of the church of Sardis is reprobated, 3 exhorted to repent, and threatened if he do not repent. 8 The angel of the church of Philadelphia is approved, for his diligence and patience. 15 The angel of Laodicea rebuked, for being neither hot nor cold. 19 and admonished to be more zealous. 20 Christ standeth at the door and knocketh.

AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write ; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars : I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die : for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in

Sardis which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white : for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write ; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth ;

8 I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it : for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write ; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God ;

15 I know thy works, that thou

John seeth the

REVELATION,

throne of God.

art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked :

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

CHAPTER IV.

2 John seeth the throne of God in heaven. 4 The four and twenty elders.

6 The four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 10 The elders lay down their crowns, and worship him that sat on the throne.

AFTER this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven : and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me ; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit : and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone : and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne

were four and twenty seats : and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment ; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices : and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal : and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him ; and they were full of eyes within : and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

CHAPTER V.

1 The book sealed with seven seals : 9 which only the Lamb that was slain is worthy to open. 12 Therefore the elders praise him, 9 and confess that he redeemed them with his blood.

AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was

The sealed book.

able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not : behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof : for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne,

CHAPTER VI. The opening of the seals.

and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

CHAPTER VI.

1 The opening of the seals in order, and what followed thereupon, containing a prophecy to the end of the world.

A ND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat on him had a bow ; and a crown was given unto him : and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse *that was* red : and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another : and there was given unto him a great sword.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse ; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny ; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse : and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held :

*An angel sealeth*REVELATION, *the servants of God.*

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

CHAPTER VII.

3 An angel sealeth the servants of God in their foreheads. 4 The number of them that were sealed: of the tribes of Israel a certain number. 9 Of all other nations an innumerable multitude, which stand before the throne, clad in white robes, and palms in their hands. 14 Their robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb.

AND after these things I saw A four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

8 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the

seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and *there were* sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

Seventh seal opened. CHAPTER VIII. *The trumpets sounded.*

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

1 At the opening of the seventh seal, 2 seven angels had seven trumpets given them. 6 Four of them sound their trumpets, and great plagues follow. 3 Another angel putteth incense to the prayers of the saints on the golden altar.

AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part

of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

CHAPTER IX.

1 At the sounding of the fifth angel, a star falleth from heaven, to whom is given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 He openeth the pit, and there come forth locusts like scorpions. 12 The first woe past. 13 The sixth trumpet soundeth. 14 Four angels are let loose, that were bound.

AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3 And there came out of the smoke

Sixth trumpet sounded. REVELATION, An angel with a book.

locusts upon the earth : and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it ; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle ; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron ; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails : and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

12 One woe is past ; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand : and I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone : and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions : and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails : for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood : which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk :

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

CHAPTER X.

1 A mighty strong angel appeareth with a book open in his hand. 6 He sweareth by him that liveth for ever, that there shall be no more time. 9 John is commanded to take and eat the book.

AND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire :

2 And he had in his hand a little book open : and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth : and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven

John eateth the book.

CHAPTER XI. *Two witnesses prophesy.*

thunders uttered, and write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer :

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets,

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up ; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey : and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

CHAPTER XI.

3. *The two witnesses prophesy.* 6 They have power to shut heaven, that it rain not. 7 The beast shall fight against them, and kill them. 8 They lie unburied, 11 and after three days and a half rise again. 14 The second woe is past. 15 The seventh trumpet soundeth.

AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod : and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not ; for it is given unto the Gentiles : and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sack-cloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy : and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet ; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud ; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand : and the remnant were

The dragon cast

REVELATION,

out of heaven.

affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the *kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

CHAPTER XII.

1 A woman clothed with the sun travelleth. 4 The great red dragon standeth before her, ready to devour her child: 6 when she was delivered she fleeth into the wilderness. 7 Michael and his angels fight with the dragon, and prevail. 13 The dragon being cast down into the earth, persecutes the woman.

AND there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and

A beast riseth

CHAPTER XIII.

out of the sea.

half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII.

1 *A beast riseth out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns, to whom the dragon giveth his power.* 11 *Another beast cometh up out of the earth.* 14 *causeth an image to be made of the former beast,* 15 *and that men should worship it,* 16 *and receive his mark.*

AND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion : and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death ; and his deadly wound was healed : and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast : and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast ? who is able to make war with him ?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies ; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to

overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity : he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth ; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast ; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads :

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast : for it is the number of a man ; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

CHAPTER XIV.

1 *The Lamb standing on mount Sion with his company.* 6 *An angel preacheth the gospel.* 8 *The fall of Babylon.* 16 *The harvest of the world, and putting in of the sickle.* 20 *The vintage and winepress of the wrath of God.*

AND I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which

is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the

The seven angels with space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

CHAPTER XV.
1 The seven angels with the seven last plagues. 3 The song of them that overcome the beast. 7 The seven vials full of the wrath of God.

AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

CHAPTER XVI.

2 The angels pour out their vials full of wrath. 6 The plagues that follow thereupon. 15 Christ cometh as a thief. Blessed are they that watch.

AND I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth

John's vision of

REVELATION,

the great whore.

and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air ; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings ; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell : and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent : and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

CHAPTER XVII.

3, 4 A woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, with a golden cup in her hand, sitteth upon the beast, 5 which is great Babylon, the mother of all abominations. 9 The interpretation of the seven heads, 12 and the ten horns. 8 The punishment of the whore. 14 The victory of the Lamb.

AN D there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither ; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters :

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness : and I

saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication :

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus : and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel ? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not ; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition : and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10 And there are seven kings : five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come ; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet ; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them : for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings : and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

2 Babylon is fallen. 4 The people of God commanded to depart out of her.

9 The kings of the earth, 11 with the merchants and mariners, lament over her. 20 The saints rejoice for the judgments of God upon her.

AND after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power ; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she reward-

ed you, and double unto her double according to her works : in the cup which she hath filled full to her double.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her : for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city ! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her ; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more :

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and

The marriage

REVELATION,

of the Lamb.

decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

CHAPTER XIX.

1 God is praised in heaven for judging the great whore, and avenging the blood of his saints. 7 The marriage of the Lamb. 10 The angel will not be worshipped. 17 The fowls called to the great slaughter.

AND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the

great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Satan bound for

CHAPTER XX.

a thousand years.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God :

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth : and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

CHAPTER XX.

2 *Satan bound for a thousand years.* 6
The first resurrection : they blessed that have part therein. 7 *Satan let loose again.* 8 *Gog and Magog.* 10
The devil cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. 12 *The last and general resurrection.*

AND I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled : and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle : the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went upon the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city : and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another

*A description of the***REVELATION, heavenly Jerusalem.**

book was opened, which is *the book* of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

CHAPTER XXX.

1 *A new heaven and a new earth. 10 The heavenly Jerusalem, with a full description thereof. 23 She needeth no sun, the glory of God is her light. 24 The kings of the earth bring their riches unto her.*

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write : for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sor-

cerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the glory of God : and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal :

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel :

13 On the east three gates ; on the north three gates ; on the south three gates ; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth : and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

18 And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper : and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte;

River and tree of life. CHAPTER XXII. *God the light of the city.*

the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23 And the city had no need of the sun; neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

CHAPTER XXII.

1 The river of the water of life. 2 The tree of life. 5 The light of the city of God is himself. 9 The angel will not be worshipped. 18 Nothing may be added to the word of God, nor taken therefrom.

AND he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no night

there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever

Denunciation against REVELATION, XXII. altering God's word.

will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book :

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book

of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

THE END.

INTRODUCTION.

—o—

IT is not because I have any new system of interpretation to offer ; nor is it because I think that I have any peculiar insight into its mysteries, that I propose for consideration and prayer this Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is that having experienced, both in my own soul and in my ministerial work, some fulfilment of the special promise of blessing which belongs to the book, I desire, God helping me, to provoke to a more earnest seeking of that blessing than is common even amongst Christian men, and to have it more abundantly myself.

That there are many who neglect the Book, many who never read it, and not a few who deprecate the study of it as unprofitable, if not even hurtful, is a proposition which will hardly be denied. And yet it comes to us not only as undeniably a portion of that word which is all God's word, and written for our learning, but also with a peculiar commendation. Upon the title page, as it were, God's own hand has written, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein," ch. i. 3.

Again, at the close we read "These sayings are faithful and true—blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book," ch. xxii. 6, 7.

Is not this as if the Lord were meeting beforehand the reluctance to study the Revelation which has strangely enough obtained? Surely with such words before us we may be confident that God, who has declared of all His Holy Scripture that it is profitable, will not refuse His Spirit to those who ask for His gracious guidance into this truth also; if they ask, not to gratify natural curiosity, but that they be wiser unto salvation, to the Lord's own glory, and stand in a truer readiness for His promised coming again.

Yet let us beware of anything like dogmatism and self-confidence, in interpreting the mysterious things that lie before us. About things necessary to salvation there is no room for doubt or a second opinion. God in His mercy, has spoken so plainly that the simplest may know how to be saved; how to glorify God by a holy life and peaceful death; how to attain to a place in the inheritance of the saints in light. And God forbid that we should ever speak or think doubtfully of the way of salvation, as if God had not certainly revealed it.

There are even some future things about which we may speak very positively. It is not more certain that Jesus Christ came of old to visit us in great humility, than it is that He will come again in His Glorious Majesty to judge the quick and dead. It is not more certain that He once stood before Pontius Pilate than it is that we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

But when we come to particulars, to the more

minute prophecies which fill up the outline, then it becomes us to speak and think cautiously and reservedly, to avoid dogmatic assertion, to be very humble, and to be ready to acknowledge that after all we may not have found the true interpretation.

The subject before us is eminently practical ; chiefly because it appeals to one of the strongest and most influential affections in human nature. The Book leads up to "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ," and that is emphatically "that blessed HOPE." God has revealed it that we should look for it ; and, once believed in the heart, it is a stimulant to patience, to perseverance, to fidelity in the use of talents, to holy living and heavenly-mindedness, second only to God's love in Christ. God knows how best to deal with the human nature which He made, and this is how he deals with it. He sets before us something infinitely better than that which He requires us to give up, that a new love coming into the heart with a sweeping, overmastering power, may drive out the old.

And the thing comes to pass. God's method succeeds where every other will and must fail. It is no small obedience that God requires when He says "Love not the world" to the man who loves it heart and soul. But God says it with an inducement which, once believed, is amply sufficient. Beside this world God places another, beside the gold of earth God places the gold of the New Jerusalem, beside the creature God places Himself. And if they who are, as they know full well, living for this world and not another, and who, if sometimes mindful of religion, soon fall back again at the

thought of what they must give up, would just sit down and quietly, calmly, and honestly consider all that God freely invites them to receive, I doubt not that, by God's blessing, "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened to know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," they would then rise up willingly to let all else go rather than lose an eternity so rich. And if we, whom God's grace has taught to walk by faith and not by sight, did more truly have our conversation in heaven, and did more seriously mind the things which God hath prepared for us, sure am I that we should not so often find out to our shame, how far too much we are occupied with the ambitions of earth, and far too much depressed, burdened, and saddened with its toils and sorrows.

The example of Moses is distinctly proposed to us. He was assailed by the allurements of worldly honour, but he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was tempted to a life of ease and self-indulgence in all the perfection of such a life ; but he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He was offered unbounded wealth, with all that wealth can purchase ; but he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. And all this he did, we are told, by faith, and because "he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Heb. xi. 24-27.

THE TITLE PAGE.

Chapter I. vv. 1-4.

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto
Him, &c.*

THE words of the title, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, may mean either that the contents are revealed in some special way by Jesus Christ, or that the subject matter is, in some special manner, Jesus Christ Himself revealed. Which is the meaning intended? The question is well worth consideration. For the Title is given by God, and God invariably calls things what they are. His names are not empty words, but always indicate the essential character of that which is named. There are some other scriptures which may help us here. The phrase, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," is found several times in the New Testament, and in each place its meaning is clear. In every instance it means, not something revealed by Christ, but Christ Himself revealed. There is one doubtful passage, but only doubtful at first sight; it is St. Paul's declaration that he learnt the Gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 12. We might take this to mean that it was Jesus Christ who revealed the truth to the apostle. But he goes on to say what he

did "when it pleased God to reveal His Son" in him ; and he evidently refers to the marvellous manifestation of Christ to him on his way to Damascus. The revelation by which the apostle was taught was thus a double one : first, an outward revelation, in that light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, and afterwards, an inward revelation, by the Spirit of God in his heart ; but in both cases it was not only Jesus Christ *revealing*, but also Jesus Christ Himself *revealed*.

In every other passage in which the expression occurs the meaning is unquestionably, Jesus Christ revealed, not Jesus Christ revealing ; and it is equally unquestionable that the revelation intended is His manifestation in glory at the end of the world. See—

1 Cor. i. 7 :—"Waiting for the coming," or as it is in the original, "the revelation of Jesus Christ."

2 Thess. i. 7 :—Literally "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus."

1 Peter, i. 7 :—Literally "at the revelation of Jesus Christ" ; the very same as in v. 13.

When these passages are considered, there seems to be good ground for the thought that in the use of this phrase, affixed by God Himself to the Book as its distinguishing title, it was intended to give us a clue to the great subject matter of the visions that follow. At the very outset it is intimated that the Book of Revelation is in the main, a narrative of His own glorious manifestation, given to Jesus Christ by the Father, that He might show unto His servants some of its chief particulars.*

No objection can be taken to this from the word "*shortly*," "which must shortly come to

* See Ed. Irving's Prophetic Works ; *in loco*.

pass." The second coming of Christ is invariably spoken of as near at hand. It must not be assumed that the events of the Book were immediately to begin ; compare Luke xviii. 7, 8—"I tell you He will avenge them *speedily*"—the very same expression as is here translated "shortly"—yet a long delay is certainly implied.

It is not, however, necessary to insist upon this meaning of the Title ; we may take it as the one exceptional use of the phrase, and understand by it that the Book is a revelation of future things by Jesus Christ, through His servant John.

But in what sense is the Revelation "given" to Him ? It is given to Him as Mediator. Compare Mark xiii. 32 ; John v. 19, 20 ; vii. 16 ; viii. 38 ; xii. 49. On earth, in His humiliation, He spake as in His human nature He was taught of the Father by the Holy Spirit ; and it seems that even now there is, and will be unto the end, (1 Cor. xv. 24) a mediatorial dependence on the Father. And so, the Man Christ Jesus, even in His glory, receives from the Father the narrative of His own Revelation, or the revelation of future things which He now communicates to His Church.

The angel mentioned probably did no more than cause these visions to pass before the Seer. It is remarkable, however, that he does not appear to do this until chap. xvii. Compare Dan. viii. 16, and x. 10.

The proof that the John who saw and records the visions was the Evangelist of that name is conclusive. And the instrument was "worthy"; none of all the twelve so near to Christ as John, and they who live nearest to Christ learn most about Him. St. John's gospel and epistle are

emphatically the “record of the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ;” he now concludes the two, which are one.

Verse 3.—The Lord’s own promise of blessing, already referred to. It is very strong and very peculiar. No other book in the Bible is commended to us after this sort. How any Christian in view of it can think it better and wiser to omit the book from his reading because of its difficulties, than to give to it his most serious and devout attention, it is hard to understand.

ST. JOHN'S ADDRESS AND SALUTATION.

Chapter I. vv. 4-9.

He addresses himself directly to the seven churches, whose names are subsequently given, but these are evidently, in some way representatives of the Church in every age. The salutation, much the same as St. Paul and St. Peter adopt, is in the name of the Three Persons of the Godhead. From (1) Him which is, and which was, and which is to come. It is literally, “from HE that is,” &c. This, however, is not an unlearned violation of grammar, but an intentional statement in an emphatic form of the name of the Father, the self-existing, independent, eternal One. “I AM hath sent me.” Ex. iii.14. (2) “The seven Spirits which are before His Throne:” not seven angels, but the Holy Spirit Himself in His sevenfold operations, varied and diverse, but full and complete, and the work of one and the self-same Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 4). And (3) from Jesus Christ, “the faithful witness” (John xviii. 37); “the first-begotten of the dead” (Col. i. 18); “the

Prince of the Kings of the earth" (Philip. ii. 9-12). See Is. lv. 4, and Psalm lxxxix. 27, 37.

The very mention of the Master whom he loved so well, seems to have fired St. John's heart that he breaks forth abruptly into an exulting doxology, "Unto Him that loved us," and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." He anticipates the coming kingdom. And then, it is as if he could not repress the thought occasioned by the visions which he is about to record; many visions, each with its own meaning, but leaving upon St. John's mind this one commanding certainty, as the ultimate issue of them all—"Behold He cometh with clouds." Here is the key-note of the book. It is emphatically "the Book of the coming One"; assuring the Church, indeed, that it is He who comes providentially, in the great events and epochs of history; that behind all human agents and earthly things He is present, Himself controlling and ordering all; but assuring us also that He will come again personally, in His Glorious Majesty; at last to put an end to sorrow and suffering, to unfasten the grasp of the usurper, to overthrow every opposing power, to bring in the full salvation which He has accomplished—"our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul," and

To make this blighted world of ours
His own fair world again.

V. 7.—Observe the touching reference to the Jews. "They which pierced Him." The previous statement, "Every eye shall see Him," makes it plain that not all who have pierced Him by

their sins are now intended, but they who literally crucified Him, and to whom He said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven," Matt. xxvi. 64. See Zech. xii. 10. "And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him," for He cometh "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i. 8.

V. 8.—"I am Alpha and Omega." It is the eternal comprehensiveness of the Lord that is intended. All things; all creatures, from everlasting to everlasting, lie within Him, who is Himself incomprehensible. Hence His absolute, perfect, eternal control over them all. See notes on ch. xxii. 13.

THE PRELIMINARY VISION.

Chapter I. vv. 9-20.

VERSE 9. The writer describes himself and the circumstances in which he wrote. He was the only remaining apostle, possibly, the only survivor of those who had personally conversed with Christ. He was the beloved disciple, and was signally favoured in being the medium of the messages to the Churches. But he gives himself no higher titles than these, their "brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ," and simply adds that he was at that time a lonely exile in Patmos "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

The world, let us remember, is the same now in its attitude towards the true Christ as it was then, and the unconverted heart as hostile as ever to true Christian confession. Never be surprised if persecution befall you in the way to Heaven, if you are made to feel alone. "If ye were of the world the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The saying is as true now as when first spoken, and it will be true to the end.

But the world and Satan are utterly powerless to silence the voice of God, when God proposes to speak. The very circumstances in

which the enemy thinks to close the mouth of God's witnesses, are overruled to the contrary. John was a lonely exiled prisoner, but God gives him a voice to speak from Patmos to all the Churches, to the end of time. So St. Paul speaks, and ever will speak, in the Epistles of the prison house where Satan thought to silence him ; so Luther, by his translation of the Scriptures, from the prison of Wartburg ; and John Bunyan, by his immortal allegory, from Bedford Gaol. The Church of Christ has no reason to regret the persecution of her children.

V. 10.—Some understand by the expression "in the spirit on the Lord's Day," that St. John was, as it were, carried forward by the Holy Spirit into the Day of the Lord's Coming, and placed in the midst of its very scenes. But this cannot be maintained. The meaning seems to be that it was on a Sunday—an Easter Sunday some think—when St. John was rapt in ecstasy from the rough and rugged earthly surroundings of Patmos, to see the visions and to hear the message which he is to write to the Churches.

Vv. 12-17.—The vision of the glorified Lord here described, is directly connected with all the coming "Revelation." The Lord Himself, in verse 19, connects it, by a little word which, unfortunately, has been omitted in our Authorized Version. The translation should be as in the Revised Version. "Write, *therefore*, the things," &c. The Church is to be assured at the outset that she may well trust Him who sends the message. He is still the son of Man, the same who once was here in humility, still caring for, sympathizing with, helping his people: yet now the King Priest, in all the

authority and power of His mediatorial exaltation (Philip. ii. 9)—“the Ancient of days,” “radiant in the glorious youthhood of heaven, venerable in that eternal wisdom and glory which He had with the Father before the world”; with eyes of fire to penetrate the secrets of the heart, as the flames penetrate the subject of its action; with feet of brass to trample down all opposition and press victoriously onward; and with voice majestic as the roar of the sea.

“And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” The thing signified is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 12). It is a two-edged sword; to cut men loose from the bondage to Satan in which they are fast bound by the chain of their iniquities, to deliver them into the glorious liberty of the children of God; or else to cut loose upon them the deserved judgments of the wrath of the Almighty.

“And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” Light of Light. “The brightness of the Father’s glory.”

St. John saw Him “standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks,” and “holding in his right hand seven stars.” Some suppose seven distinct candlesticks, as indicative of a variety of churches, but probably, it was one seven-branched candlestick that he saw (as in Zech. iv. 2-11), describing it in language suggested by the previous mention of the seven churches. The Person of the Saviour may have stood before and so prevented his seeing the main stem. The stars in his hand may have appeared as a wreath or diadem adorned with stars: the figure points to His gracious care of them, and Lordship over them.

Vv. 17-20. The Seer is altogether over-powered by the vision, until encouraged by the well remembered "Fear not," and lifted up by the touch of the self-same hand which in the old days he had so often seen stretched out to heal. Then he hears a further description of the speaker from Himself. He is before all things and behind all things ; all are from Him and to Him, absolutely subject to His control. He is the Living One, the source of all life in others, who yet has passed through death, even as one of us, and now lives for ever, the conqueror of death and of him that had the power of death. All power over that mysterious realm beyond the grave is His ; none can shut when He opens, none can open when He shuts ; none can withhold when He says "Come forth," none can refuse when He says "Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live."

The preliminary vision concludes with an explanation of the stars and the candlesticks. The seven candlesticks are the seven churches ; and the seven stars are their angels, not guardian angels, but in each case, the chief officer of the church, its responsible representative.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Chapters II. and III.

IF we might appropriate to any one portion of the Book of Revelation rather than to another the special promise of blessing "to him that heareth, and to those that hear the words of this prophecy," probably we should unanimously select these Seven Epistles to the Churches. They are spoken directly from Christ's own lips ; they came to us from the ineffable glory to which as our Mediator, He has been exalted ; they are introduced with a most impressive solemnity; their language, while comparatively simple, is peculiarly pointed ; and they are accompanied by the seven times repeated command, " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

How are they to be understood ? It is certain that they were addressed to seven literal historical churches then existing in Asia Minor, and that they refer to actual facts and circumstances, persons and conduct. But it is equally certain that they are not old worn-out letters, interesting as memoirs of a past age, but of no practical value. These seven were selected as in some

way representing the Church or Churches of all ages, down to the end of this present dispensation.

It has been maintained that they are properly prophetic, setting forth as in a picture, the whole future of the Church militant here on earth as the Lord foresaw it, in the successive epochs of its history. Attention is called—

(1) To the undeniable significance of the number seven in all Scripture, and in the Revelation particularly. It is the number of completeness, consummation, fulness.

(2) To the description twice given of the Book, “the words of this *prophecy*,” “the words of the book of this *prophecy*,” chs. i. 3; xxii. 19. The whole is thus declared to be prophecy, and there is no indication that the Epistles are not included in this description.

(3) To the term “mystery,” as applied to them (i. 20). The mystery is not the stars, nor the candlesticks, for they are explained to be the angels, and the churches. The mystery seems to refer to the contents of the Epistles, and to intimate that there is something more intended than meets the eye at once.

(4)—To the exhortation which concludes each of the Epistles, “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.” Why is this language seven times used? Does it not of itself indicate a hidden meaning, to be diligently sought for, and regarded with particular attention?

For these reasons, apart from the subject-matter of the Epistles themselves, some have supposed that on the historic basis of the character and circumstances of the seven churches (selected because their prominent characteristics

were exactly adapted to the Lord's intention), there is built up a prophecy of the future of the Church on earth. Each of the seven is a prophetic type of the Church as a whole, and foreshadows her great prominent characteristics at a corresponding period of her history. Not however, as if the characteristics of one period were entirely to pass away before those of another should appear; but that as these actual seven churches existed at the same time, so also should the things signified to some extent be coexistent.

It may be added, that Church history may very properly be divided into seven consecutive periods, the prominent features of which are very similar to those of these Churches in their order.

1.—The first period, that of the immediate successors of the Apostles, was one of an already falling from the first love, of false apostles, false teachers from the body of the Church itself, together with labour and patience for Christ, and intolerance of error, on the part of His true people—an *Ephesian* period.

2.—Then came the period of Pagan persecution, of martyrdom; and it is remarkable that during this period the Church endured exactly ten distinct outbursts of fury, and that the last of these continued for exactly ten years—the *Smyrna* period.

3.—Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, and passed almost at a bound from distress and persecution to high prosperity, honour and affluence, under the shelter and favour of Constantine. But the Church rapidly degenerated from her ancient purity. A spirit of worldliness possessed her, covetousness crept in, and the doctrines of ambi-

tious men who pandered to the depravity of human nature, and drew disciples by turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, teaching that Christian liberty is liberty to sin. And all this "suffered" by those whose own faith was true —a period not unlike the Church in *Pergamos*.

4.—The age of full-developed Popery followed, the age of Papal-supremacy, not, however, without a faithful few. And in all history there is no character which so well typifies the Papacy, as does that of the adulterous and idolatrous wife of Ahab, whose name the Lord selects to express the character and doctrine of the false prophetess in the Church at *Thyatira*.

5.—It may seem at first that the series breaks down at the next stage; for following upon the supremacy of Popery, came the glorious Reformation with its inestimable blessings, and how could it be said here "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead"? But we must remember that we are considering not events but periods, and their outstanding characteristics; and it is attested beyond all doubt, that for a long while after that the Reformation had become an accomplished fact, a dead orthodoxy was the characteristic of the Protestant Churches. Life and doctrine were severed, men were content with a head knowledge of the truth, and the Church was, from the end of the sixteenth till the latter half of the eighteenth century, a very *Sardis*.

6.—A great and blessed change took place. Towards the close of the last century the revival began; and ever since, a Christian, brotherly love, resulting in multiplied efforts for the welfare of others, has perhaps, been the chief characteristic of the Church as a whole.

Missionary societies for the heathen abroad, missions of all sorts to the godless at home, religious machinery multiplied on all sides and ever in motion, illustrate and fulfil the Lord's "Behold I set before you an open door" to the Church of *Philadelphia*, the Church of brotherly love.

7.—But who sees not the characteristics of the last of the seven more and more evident amongst us? A religion splendidly formal; a Christianity of architecture and art, and eloquence and music, or of sensationalism and mere animal excitement; a lack of the true spirituality which cannot associate with worldliness, and an increasing worldliness which hates, as it must hate, true spirituality; an impatience of anything like positive doctrine, a refusal to take up the cross of earnest contention for the faith, a disposition to regard all religious teachings as mere opinions, equally right or equally wrong; and over all this, the boast of the enlightenment, the attainments, of this nineteenth century, as if true Christianity had never been seen before: these things are with us at least in their beginnings—the very characteristics of the church of the *Laodiceans*.

All this deserves patient and prayerful attention. It is not a theory to be lightly set aside as the mere outcome of the fancy. The reasons given are drawn from the inspired language; and the agreement pointed out between the characteristics of the churches and the facts of Church history is at least arresting to the unprejudiced student.

But let not this interfere for a moment with the more practical, the more important and the larger understanding of the Epistles—that they are for

doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, for comfort and encouragement ; the inheritance of the Church of all ages, and our inheritance to-day. They are the Lord's living words to His people, spoken to us severally, as our need requires. "They are no other than the expression of that special message of rebuke or encouragement which day by day, in all ages, the Lord sees to be needed, in one or other of its parts, by every Church and every Christian on earth. Every body of Christians we are reminded, like every individual, has at each moment, its own definite religious character and condition : like Ephesus, sound, but with declining love and faith : like Smyrna, faithful in tribulation and rich in good works : like Pergamum, steadfast under open trial, but too tolerant of compromises with the world's ways : like Thyatira, diligent in well doing, and with many signs of spiritual progress, yet allowing false teaching and corrupt practices to go unchecked : like Sardis, retaining the form of sound doctrine, but in practice sunk into a deep slumber, threatening spiritual death : like Philadelphia, faithful to the Lord's word and name, loving Him though in weakness, and therefore kept in safety : or finally, like Laodicea, lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, self-satisfied because sunk too deep in spiritual sloth and indifference to be conscious of her poverty, and ready, therefore, to lose all without struggle or regret."*

* Quoted in Alford's Prolegomena.

EPHESUS.

Chapter II. 1-8.

THE series naturally begins with Ephesus, the capital city of pro-consular Asia.

V. 1. The description is suitable to the opening epistle.

V. 2. "I know thy works." The phrase is common to all the epistles, and so repeated, is impressively significant of the practical nature of Christianity, and of the principles upon which the Judgment of the Great Day will be conducted. The "works" include thoughts and words, as well as deeds, and indicate the true character of the man, whether in Christ or not. Here is a terrible truth for the insincere. He may deceive men, but there is no deceiving Him with whom we have to do. Those eyes of fire penetrate through all disguises, all hypocrisies, and all the appearances of a false faith. But here is an equally comfortable truth for the sincere. It is likely enough that your work for Him will be misunderstood, and it is certain to be stained and marred by sin. The world will often sneer at it, Satan will make a mock of it, and your own heart will faint and fail when you mark the woful deficiencies. But Christ knows it. Right through all appearances, and amidst

all failures, He sees and appreciates the aim and desire of your true loyalty to Him.

Vv. 2, 3. Notice the language, "I know thy labour and thy patience, and thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." It is just in this perseverance that many fail. They begin well. They work hard at first, and seem ready to do anything. But presently, when opposition arises, or difficulties unexpectedly appear, or they cannot have their own will, they fall away: it even happens that they give up the work just because they are tired of it. This is not work which the Lord commends. He wants none of it. True work is work which lasts, and the true worker is he that endures, as the good ground hearers are they who bring forth fruit with patience. A story is told of a German musician whose sense of sound was remarkably acute. One day he entered a church in which on that occasion, the singing was at first altogether discordant. This was so painful to him that he thought of leaving at once, but not wishing to disturb the congregation, he resolved to remain and endure. Presently, his quick ear detected the clear, soft voice of a lady singing in perfect tune. Patiently she sang on, until one by one her companions yielded to her influence, and before the hymn was finished the whole choir were singing together in harmony. So, the man whose life is in harmony with God's will, and who by patient continuance in well-doing sings out God's truth in his daily conduct in the world, will gradually influence those who are about him. God will use that man for turning the discords of earth into the harmonies of heaven. "They that

dwell under his shadow shall return ; " "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Vv. 2 and 6. He approves the firmness with which they had withstood an evidently determined effort to introduce false living and false doctrine. Mark the antithesis, " Thou hast borne," " Thou canst not bear them which are evil, &c." They could bear injustice, persecution, but they could not bear sin ; they could not tolerate untrue teaching. And the Lord highly commends it. There is a holy impatience of evil which is inseparable from true fear of Him. There is a faith once committed to the saints for which He will have us earnestly contend. Compare ch. ii. 14, 20. Note that the false apostles had probably arisen from the church itself, and see Acts xx. 28-30.

V. 4. " Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Evidently, it is only His love which complains and complains because it finds not the responsive love which it seeks. Here were work, and labour, and patience, and orthodoxy, and protestantism ; but with all these outward manifestations there was a lack of love ; and the Lord has it against them. The church at Ephesus apparently, did not know how it was with her ; or rather, perhaps, was hiding the truth from herself behind her much labour and patience. And so, it often happens that his own declension in grace is unsuspected by the individual in whom it is a perilous reality. It is not like a disease of the body which plainly announces itself ; it is rather like the fatal malady of consumption in its earlier stages,

which flushes the cheek, and makes the eye to sparkle while the work of death is going on within. Yet, it is not hard to find out the truth if only we can be persuaded earnestly to look for it. How is it with your private prayer? Is there less of real communion with Christ in it, less glad pouring out of the heart before Him, when He and you are alone? And how is it with God's word? Is it less your necessary food than it used to be? is there less delight in it, so that you are getting into the habit, if not of neglecting your Bible, yet, of reading it as a mere duty? How is it in your daily life and conversation? Is there less direct fellowship with Christ, less leaning on Him, less speaking to Him, less trusting Him, less jealousy for Him and His cause and His truth because it is His? These are indications of a falling away from the first love. And they are symptoms of spiritual sickness, which a man neglects at awful peril. "I can certainly testify," writes Bishop Ryle, "that by far the most hopeless deathbeds I have attended have been those of backsliders. I have seen such persons go out of the world without hope, whose conscience appeared really dead, buried, and gone, and on whom every truth and doctrine and argument appeared alike thrown away. They seemed to have lost the power of feeling, and could only lie still and despair."

V. 5. "Remember from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works." Here are the conditions of healing. The first is a review of the past—"Remember." Sit down and quietly think over what once you were and once enjoyed. Call to remembrance the former

days. Get alone with God, and as in His sight put to your inmost soul the question

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view,
Of Jesus and His Word?”

But this is to lead to practical effort. “Repent.” In the last chapter of Hosea, amongst the words which God Himself put into the mouth of the returning backslider, are these—“Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods.” This was Israel’s besetting sin; the turning to Assyria for help, and to Egypt for horses, and even to the idols of those heathen countries, in time of danger and difficulty. God puts His hand upon *it*. Bidding them pray against all iniquity, He specifies this in particular, the head and front of their offending. Bearing this in mind, I think that here this word *repent*, while of course it points at all wrong, points at some particular wrong. What this may have been at Ephesus we know not. But in almost every instance of spiritual declension there will be found some more easily besetting sin, to which the declension is mainly due. And the Lord, speaking to the man’s conscience, bids him emphatically to repent of *that*. Some time ago, I saw a document signed by an Englishman, who had become naturalized as a subject of the United States. By that document he declared, that in giving in his allegiance to the American Government, he renounced allegiance to every foreign Potentate, and to *Queen Victoria in particular*. Why was he required to make this

particular declaration ? Not because of any enmity to the Queen, but because it was felt that the man's fidelity would be most tried by his natural love for his native land. So God when He brings us back to our allegiance, while He shows us all our sin, and bids us in His strength resolve against it, shows us in particular, and bids us resolve in particular, against that from which we are most in danger. Would you have God revive the love of Christ growing faint within you ? then honestly go to the main cause of the mischief. Bring out the Achan which has caused the trouble ; and whether it has been self-will or self-righteousness, or some habit of sin, or some wrongful compliance with the world, or whatsoever ; in fervent prayer, in earnest resolution, in trustful endeavour, slay it before the Lord. Further, the Lord says "And do the first works." This in its connection is very remarkable. It is not of want of *work* that He has complained, but of defective *love* ; and yet, He says not "Repent, and love Me with thy first love," but "Repent, and do the first works." He is speaking according to our nature. We cannot command our hearts, to make them love either God or man ; but we can exercise our hearts towards both, and it is in exercise that God brings back again the lost warmth of life. It often happens that they who are conscious of spiritual declension make one or the other of two very hurtful mistakes. Either they sit still, waiting for some visitation of the Holy Spirit to recover them, and turning the wholesome "remembrance" which the Lord enjoins into an unwholesome brooding over the past ; or they rush into all the activities of

religious business, joining committees, attending meetings, forming societies perhaps, and so deceiving themselves in their trouble and carelessness about many things, but not deceiving Him who wants love, and not the mere love of duty, but the duty of true love.

Let the man whom the Lord intends set it before him to speak with Christ in prayer as once he did ; to read with Christ in the Bible as once he did ; to live and work in the realized presence of Christ as once he did ; in a word to exercise his love, fainting though it be ; and of the Lord's readiness to meet him in that exercise, he may be sure beforehand. The prodigal said, "I will arise, and *go* to my father." But while he was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and *ran* to welcome him.

V. 7. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." See ch. xxii. 2, and note there.

SMYRNA.

Chapter II. 8-12.

V. 8. Compare ch. i. 17, 18. The description is in harmony with the promises in the Epistle.

V. 9. We are prone to confine our notions of good works to active service for Christ. But there is a passive service as well as an active service; a service of suffering, as true as the service of doing. It is this that the Lord commends in Smyrna. She presented her works to Him in suffering for Him; and evidently He is well pleased with it. It is as if she had said, "I too would fain be up and doing good works, but I cannot, I am poor and persecuted." He answers, "I know thy tribulation and poverty," endured no doubt for Him and His truth.

"But thou art rich." Theirs were "the true riches;" riches which the world thinks nothing of, but satisfying riches, eternal riches, infinite riches. Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ? Then you are rich indeed. We have a saying, "he that gets out of debt grows rich," and has not God for Christ's sake forgiven you all that debt, the debt of your sin against Him? Yes, He has. There is not a farthing unpaid, not a charge against your

name in the Book of God's remembrance. And has not God already opened Himself to you, saying "I am thy God"? Yes, indeed He has; there is not an attribute, not a perfection of God that is not open for you to trust in, and there is not a promise in all God's treasury that you may not take out and plead, and look for its fulfilment in God's good time and manner. Is not this to be rich? It is all your privilege, and if you do not live up to it, whose fault is it but your own, in your sinful slowness of heart to believe all that God has told you? And all this is but an earnest. The inheritance is reserved. You are joint-heir with Christ to such riches of glory, that in bestowing them God intends to display the exceeding riches of His grace. God has pledged His word for it. If you suspect the story of it, you are suspecting God Himself. If you think that this is too great a thing for you to receive, the answer is, that it is not too great for God to give in recognition of the infinite merits of the Blessed Redeemer, His own dear Son.

There is little doubt that the sufferings of Smyrna were those of bloody persecution, chiefly at the hands of the "synagogue of Satan," the unbelieving Jews, than whom none were fiercer in their hatred of Christianity. Our lot is cast in easier days, but for every one of us the way to the crown runs by the cross.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the world where sorrows are unknown."

Why is this? It is a mystery in great part. We cannot now know it particularly. But we know this much, that suffering is indispensable from the training and education by which the

Lord prepares His own people, one by one, for the place which each will occupy, and the service which each will render in eternity. Suffering is not arbitrary; God never sends needless suffering merely that He may reward the patient endurance of it. God's chastisement is medicine, is training, is preparation. You remember the Psalmist's report of Joseph in prison, "the iron entered into his soul." A wise man says of this, "If the iron entered into his soul, it was only that it might make him strong. Rightly viewed, that otherwise mournful phrase is most hopeful and animating. For if, on the one hand, it sets forth the misery and despair of the captive; on the other hand, it sets forth the inward strength bred of that despair and misery. It is a good thing to have iron in the soul, although to get it there involves so great a pain. It is as indispensable to spiritual strength as it is to physical health. If the world wants iron dukes and iron men, God wants iron saints, therefore He suffers the iron to enter into their souls;" and, as a rule, He passes them through sufferings in proportion to the greatness of the service upon which He employs them. Carry this thought forward into eternity. Remember that the great hereafter is to be one of royal service. Look upon the sufferings of this present time as the needful though mysterious preparation for the future. So will you more and more be able to say with St. Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "If we suffer, we shall reign."

V. 10. "Fear none of those things which thou

shalt suffer ; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." He plainly tells them that they are about to suffer. Christ never leads men blindfold into or in His service. We can never say when trial comes because of our Christian profession, "He never told me of this." His word to the disciples is true for us, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended." But if we are not to be offended, we are also not to fear. In Smyrna there was enough to make flesh and blood tremble ; behind all the hatred and cruelty of their persecutors the Lord shows them the great enemy of Christ and His Church, the Devil himself, instigating and aiding his willing agents. But the Lord says, "fear nothing and no one ; it is your business to be faithful, leaving your safety to Me."

Whether the Church in Smyrna actually suffered some special persecution for the space of "ten days," we do not know. Something of the kind seems probable. However, the practical lesson is, that the days of our trials are all numbered, carefully measured out by the Lord's own unerring wisdom. "Ten days," no less, but no more.

For the accomplishment of the promise of the Crown of Life see ch. xx. 4 : "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them ; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," &c. This, St. John says, is "the first resurrection." They who partake of it are seen by him as one great company seated on thrones. Prominent

amongst them, perhaps as forming a separate division by themselves, he sees "the noble army of martyrs." And these all "lived and reigned with Christ." Now, put the two together, "they lived," that is to say, they were raised from the dead ; and, "they reigned with Christ." Do they not amount to the very thing promised to Smyrna, "a crown of life"? Not that the thing promised is confined to those who are called to the martyr's death. But in a letter addressed in the first instance to those who were about to be called to seal their testimony with their blood, there seems to be a peculiar fitness in the selection of such a promise.

V. 11. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." "The second death." It is an expression which is found only in the Book of the Revelation. It occurs four times, and it is explained to be "the lake of fire," ch. xx. 14; "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," ch. xxi. 8. What is it to be "hurt" of this second death? Is it annihilation? Some think so, but the thought seems to be born of the desire to get rid of a supposed objection to the Gospel, rather than of faithfulness to God's Revelation. Let the passages be carefully considered, let them be compared with the teaching of the Lord of love Himself upon the same awful subject, and the true conclusion can only be that "to be hurt of the second death" is conscious, sensible existence, in everlasting destruction of body, soul, and spirit, from the presence of the Lord; "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark ix. 44. It may seem at first an anti-climax that, having promised the crown of life, the Lord should further pro-

mise exemption from this hurt. Yet it was a seasonable addition in the circumstances of these saints in Smyrna. They had to suffer, and many of them, to die for Christ a death painful and bitter to flesh and blood. Therefore they are reminded that this would be the last of their sufferings ; this would put an end to pain for them ; through the Redeemer's merits not a spark of the deserved wrath of God against sin should ever light on them ; they had nothing to fear after the grave, as they had nothing to fear before the grave ; on them the "second death" should have no power.

PERGAMOS.

Chapter II. 12-18.

V. 12. The Lord's title seems to be selected with reference to the sharp warning in v. 16.

V. 13. "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," literally, even where the throne of Satan is. Why should Pergamos be thus described? Probably because of the general character of the city. Situated in a beautiful and fertile valley, naturally disposing its inhabitants to indolence and unmanly delicacy, and overshadowed by a remarkable hill, of great value as a strong natural fortress, Pergamos had been chosen for a royal residence and treasury. It had grown into a splendid city, rich in all that constitutes earthly opulence and culture; a miniature of that world which if a man loves, the love of the Father is not in him; and of which Christ said, "If ye were of the world the world would love his own, but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Such being the character of the city, it is likely that it is therefore described in the Epistle as the very head-quarters of the great adversary, the throne of the "god of this world." Christ recognizes the difficulties of the position, "I know where

thou dwellest." "I have seen thy peculiar circumstances of temptation, the allurements by which thou art surrounded, and the bitter hatred to which for My sake thou hast been exposed. And I have seen that nevertheless thou hast held fast My name, and hast not denied My faith, even when the world showed to what lengths its hatred could go by the murder of Antipas, My faithful martyr." So now, there is not a temptation, there is not an opposition, there is not a care, a disadvantage, a distraction, an exhaustion, not a circumstance but He knows all about it. To every one of all of us He says again, "I know where thou dwellest," the street, the house, the room, the office, the workshop, the house of business, and all that you have to do and to bear, and to encounter there. Why does He tell us this? It is to assure us of His sympathy. He knows our position as caring for us, feeling for us; His knowledge is His love knowing. This of itself is help. In all true sympathy there is power. Go and sit down beside some one on whom a great sorrow has fallen, or a heavy cross has been laid, or who has been called to some severe conflict, and speak just a few wise words of loving sympathy. You may get no response, you may go away saddened, perhaps thinking that you have done more harm than good, but often you shall afterwards be told that those words of yours did good like medicine. It is recorded in the memoirs of a godly minister, whose heart God had greatly enriched with Christian sympathy, that once when preaching to the inmates of a prison, he expressed his feelings for them, and his conviction that to the grace of God alone was owing

any difference between himself and them. One of the prisoners after the service, begged for leave to speak with him, and asked him if he really meant those kind words of sympathy, and that only the grace of God made him to differ from the prisoners. Having been assured that the words expressed the preacher's heart, the man said, "I am in here for so many years, but half the trouble seems gone now that I know that I have a brother out in the world." There was the power of real sympathy. And the sympathy of Christ is real. "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities": Heb. iv. 15.

Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye.

If that poor man had a brother out in the world, we have a Brother up in yonder world. And if you and I would only open our hearts to the consolation; if only in time of trouble we would let it come right home to us that the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven is regarding us with a true personal sympathy, half the trouble would be gone already. But this is not all. Christ knows you, and Christ sympathizes with you, that He may enable you. When the apostle reminds us of His sympathy, he makes it a reason for prayer, "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 15, 16. Of that grace the Lord says Himself, "My grace is sufficient for thee." What does this mean? It means that not only for the general work of Christian life is there the all-sufficient grace of God provided; but that for every individual life, for every particular

duty and danger and difficulty, every particular temptation and trial and trouble, every particular cross and corruption and company, there is its own specially needed grace provided, and to be had for the asking, at the throne of grace. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is one long testimony of men like ourselves that there is no position, no possible trial or temptation, for which God's grace is not abundantly ample.

Here in Pergamos was another instance—a man whose circumstances were more trying and terrible than ours can ever be. It is likely enough, had he been ready to compromise, or to keep his religion to himself, that he might have saved himself, but God gave him grace to choose death rather than unfaithfulness. And now, all along the corridors of time, his name comes sounding down to us from the Master's own mouth, "Antipas, My faithful martyr." There is not a vestige of his history in Church annals; no one knows who he was, or a single particular of his faithfulness. But Christ knew him, and Christ strengthened him, and Christ has made his name immortal; and Antipas is an earnest of the truth of one part of that saying, which will be found equally true in its other part, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."

V. 14-17. "But I have a few things against thee." This is not that the thing complained of was but a trifle. But He speaks graciously, to mitigate the blame; a few things for reproof, while there are many things to commend; and

at the same time perhaps, in a tone of warning—these few things were the little leaven which, if allowed, would soon leaven the whole lump. Whether the Nicolaitanes and the Balaamites were two distinct sects is very doubtful. It seems more likely that the Lord is using illustration, and that His meaning is, that through the Nicolaitanes and their doctrine the Church in Pergamos was tempted to the same sort of sins as those which Balaam taught Balak, to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel. In unmistakable language the Holy One declares His abhorrence of them. God grant that His words, sinking deep into our hearts under pressure of the Holy Ghost, may make us fully realize how fatal, how damning, is the lie that turns the grace of God into lasciviousness, and teaches man that he may sin freely because God pardons freely, or at least be careless and loose in his moral conduct because his moral conduct is not his Saviour!

Let us however, remember that the Epistle is addressed directly to the faithful in Pergamos, rather than to the false teachers. It is their toleration of the falsehood, rather than the falsehood itself, which the Lord rebukes. The lesson is most seasonable for the days in which we live. We have false doctrines both by word and deed of all sorts around us, plausible temptations of designing men which strongly affect the unthinking multitude, and cunningly adapt themselves to every depravity and weakness of a poor fallen man's heart. Flesh and blood suggest toleration, lest we bring ourselves into trouble. Yea, flesh and blood will talk about charity, as if all would be saved at the last, whatever their lives and whatever their

doctrines. But, if the Word of God is to be trusted; the God of that Word requires us to resist to the utmost whatever is plainly against or inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ. True Christianity must from its very nature be uncompromising. It is the only salvation. Love the men, but hate their sins ; love the men, but show no tolerance to their false teaching. Do what lieth in you to save and deliver the victims of error, but strike unsparingly at the error itself. You may lose friends by it, you may make enemies by it, you may be accused of promoting divisions and stirring up strife, but you will not have your brother's blood upon your head, and you will have the Master's benediction.

V. 17. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that hath received it." About the hidden manna there can be little doubt. The mysterious food with which God fed Israel in the wilderness, a portion of which was laid up, hidden, in the most holy place in the Temple, is distinctly pointed to by the Lord as a type of Himself. (John vi. 32-52.) And He is "hidden" manna. We see Him not yet as He is. As the life itself of which He is the food, is hidden life, so the sustenance of it is altogether hidden from the world, and in a great measure from even those who partake of it. But the promise must not be confined to this feeding upon Christ by faith, which is our privilege now. Like all the other promises, it is a promise of something yet future, and I take it to be the consummation of that which we enjoy now. The being with Christ

where He is, the seeing Him as He is, the satisfying communion and fellowship with .Him, uninterruptededly and for ever.

It is not so easy to say what may be the white stone with the new name upon it. With regard to the stone, white being the colour of victory, success, favour, I think that we must be content to understand by it some special token to the individual of his own particular interest in the Redeemer King's favour and friendship, in some way to be of use to him in the eternal service.

And as for the "new name" upon the stone ; if it be the victor's own name, then it may mean a revelation to him as God's child, of the now mysterious process of his education for his throne in the kingdom ; a process of discipline and training, the explanation of which cannot be thoroughly understood by any saving he that receiveth it. Or, if the new name is a name of Christ, then the reference may be to the Urim and Thummim of the Old Testament. It is supposed that this mysterious medium of communication was a stone most precious, contained in the High Priest's breast-plate, beneath the twelve other stones which had upon them the names of the twelve tribes. Further, that there was writing upon this stone, writing which no man knew save the High Priest who had received it ; and that it was by means of this secret writing that God was pleased to direct the High Priest on special occasions. And so, the promise may be a promise of that, by which, each who receives it, shall be able to know always and infallibly, the mind and will of God, for every act and item of all the glorious and boundless service of the world to come, as a king and a priest to God for ever.

THYATIRA.

Chapter II. 18-29.

V. 18. The "eyes like unto a flame of fire" declare themselves in v. 23, and "the feet like fine brass" are for the work of v. 27.

V. 19. Here are two causes, each with its proper effect. "I know thy charity and thy service"; the love itself, and the outward ministry which declares the reality of the love. And "I know thy faith and patience," thy trust in Me, thy fidelity to Me, and the patient continuance in well-doing which is the token of faith. The Lord commands not mere service nor mere patience, but the love which serves or the service of love, and the faith which endures, or the endurance of faith. For a commentary on this read John xv. 1-11.

There is to-day no one truth of practical religion more to be remembered by His would-be servants than this that He here teaches. We live in a day of unprecedented religious activity. Religious machinery is multiplied around us beyond calculation. Never has the world seen so much stir and energy in the things of religion as now. We thank God for it. It is a most encouraging contrast to the stagnation which marked the beginning of the century. But

there is a danger, the danger of being content with mere work, irrespective of the state of heart of the worker ; and of mistaking natural virtues, natural graces, natural feelings and endeavours, for spiritual religion. Never was it more needful than it is now to declare plainly that if a man is himself out of Christ, dead work is stamped upon his best. Severed from Him, we can do nothing. To man it may seem much ; to God, it is nothing.

" And the last to be more than the first." They had grown in disposition to do His will, and in ability ; and the visible result had been proportionately greater. It is in grace as it is in nature ; wherever there is life there is growth. Certainly, if there be no evidence of growth, you cannot have been so abiding in Christ as He invites and commands. He says plainly, " He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." What else, then, can your little fruit mean but this, that you have not lived as you ought to have lived with Christ? Do you desire to glorify God? You cannot be God's child if you do not desire it. Then hear how He tells you, " Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Do you desire to be powerful in prayer? Then hear how He tells you, " If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." You may be sure that the man who lives nearest to Christ is the man who will pray the most trustfully, the most fervently, the most humbly, and the most effectually. Such a man was John Knox, of whom it is said that Mary Queen of Scots declared that she was more afraid of his prayers than of an army of 20,000 men. Once more, do you desire to

be happy? Then hear again what He says about abiding in 'Him, "These things have I said unto you that your joy may be full." The holiest man is the happiest man, the nearest to God's own happiness.

Vv. 20-25. "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, &c." The language undoubtedly points to an individual woman, one whose character and influence are expressed by the well-known name of the infamous wife of Ahab. Claiming to be a prophetess, pretending to teach, as she said, the deep things of God, but in truth teaching as the Lord calls it, "the depths of Satan," she probably urged that Christian charity and Christian liberality required concession to heathen customs and attendance at idol festivals; a spiritual fornication, surely leading to the carnal sin with which those festivals were attended. It would seem that she had been at work for some time, for the Lord says, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not." One more instance of God's slowness to punish even the worst offender. But now her time was come, "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds;" the judgment shall be so manifestly retributive that all the churches shall acknowledge the Lord's omniscience. Let every impenitent sinner know that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; that if He keeps silence and gives space to repent, it is not because He does not mean to punish sin. Oh, that it might ring in the heart of every man who is going on still in his wickedness,

and because God has allowed him to go on with impunity so long, is saying God will never punish—oh, that the Lord's warning might ring in his heart, “Behold, I will . . . except you repent of your misdeeds!” The “little space” given to that man may be almost gone.

It is recorded in the memoirs of an eminent judge, in the bad old days when men were hanged for comparative trifles, and the judges had, I suppose, a more absolute power than now, that a mere lad was brought before him and proved guilty of an offence. He determined to frighten the lad by passing sentence of death upon him, but intending to send a reprieve the next day. Sentence was passed, and the judge went home. But that night he could not sleep, and as he lay thinking over the past day, and feeling unwell, the thought flashed across his mind, “If I should die to-night, that boy would certainly be hanged.” He arose at once, made his way to the Sheriff's house, and then and there signed and left the reprieve. You are not surprised at his earnestness which would brook no delay; the boy's life was at stake. What, then, about yourself? There is a rope round the neck of your soul at this moment if you have not sought and found its salvation in Christ. “He that believeth not *is condemned already.*”

But now observe that as to Pergamos so to Thyatira; it is not so much the sin of Jezebel, as the church's toleration of Jezebel that the Lord directly reproves. They who knew the lie of her pretensions made no effectual protest against them. Perhaps, they thought that for the sake of peace and quietness, it were better to leave her alone. Perhaps, they even thought it charitable to credit her with the best intentions.

Perhaps, and this is more likely, they did not like to take up the cross, they did not like to bear the burden of protesting against her. However, they suffered her, and the Lord sharply reproves them. He repeats what He has already taught the churches, that fidelity to Him and His truth extends to intolerance of every anti-Christian error. Minor differences there must be, and with regard to these we should agree to differ. But there are differences which are not minor, and are not for a moment to be allowed. Read 2 John, 9-12: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." And what is that man's position who hath not God? Says an old writer—"he that hath not God before he dies, the devil shall have him when he dies." Now mark what follows, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine—the doctrine of Christ—receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." The words need no explanation, unless it is to point out that St. John is speaking not of an ordinary traveller seeking hospitality, but of a teacher, who, not bringing the doctrine of Christ, brings of necessity false doctrine with him: and they are no outburst of the fiery intemperate zeal of a partisan; they are a solemn command coming to us with all the authority of the Holy Ghost Himself. May we lay them to heart! Errors are multiplying around us, anti-Christian doctrines are proclaimed on every side, the multitude are to a great extent indifferent, and our natural tendency is to keep our religion to ourselves, and to refuse the cross of standing up boldly for the truth of Christ. But the Master requires it. It

is a cross ; it is, as the Lord here calls it, a "burden" ; the man who acts upon the principles thus laid down must endure to be called bigoted, and narrow-minded, and uncharitable. But the path of duty is plain. Remember, the question is not only about your own feelings. It is impossible that you can truly belong to Christ and not feel an indescribable pain as you hear the doctrine, and witness the practices which dishonour Him. It is recorded in the life of Henry Martyn, that on hearing words of blasphemy against Christ from a heathen with whom he had been disputing, he showed himself so painfully affected that his adversary asked for an explanation. "I told him," writes Martyn, "that I could not endure that Jesus should not be glorified, and that it would be hell to me if He were to be always thus dishonoured. He was astonished, and again asked the reason why. 'If any one pluck out your eyes,' I replied, 'there is no saying 'Why do you feel pain?' It is feeling. It is because I am one with Christ that I am thus dreadfully wounded.' On his again apologizing, I told him that I rejoiced at what had happened, inasmuch as it made me feel nearer the Lord than ever."

It may not be given to every one of us thus fully to realize his union with Christ ; yet if you are in Christ, you cannot but feel wounded by all that contradicts your Lord and Saviour. But you are not to be content with having such feelings. Let those feelings be *declared* ; throw in your influence, whatever it may be, against the torrent of evil. Never be ashamed to confess Christ, and, as occasion requires, speak up fearlessly for the truth, and against whatever is contrary to it ; above all preach that truth, by

the grace of God, in a life and conversation distinctly and manifestly Christlike.

Ver. 26. "Power over the nations, &c.," and "The morning star." Compare Psalm xlix. 14, cxlix. 5-9, also Rev. iv. v. and xxii. 16, and see notes there. The promises seem to mean, that when Christ is to His own glorious manifestation what the morning star is to the day ; not yet come, but immediately coming ; newly risen from the throne, to smite the nations with the stroke of préparation for the Day of His appearing ; then, His people shall be with Him : with Him in safety above the scenes of that fiery vengeance ; and not only in safety, but associated with Him, His ministers, as He executes upon an apostate world the judgments of the great tribulation in which this dispensation shall be brought to its close.

SARDIS.

Chapter III. 1-7.

VER. 1.—“The seven Spirits of God” are the Holy Spirit Himself, ch. i. 4. These Spirits Christ “has.” It is His sole prerogative to shed forth the Holy Ghost in all His energies. The title is most appropriate to the whole Epistle.

“Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” The words point to the hypocrite, to the man who is knowingly living in some secret sin which he conceals beneath the cloak of a Christian profession. The Lord knows that man. That secret sin is in the light of God’s countenance. And surely upon none shall the wrath of God fall down more heavily than upon him who thus challenges God to discover his sin. See the terrible warning in Ezek. xiv. 7. More directly, the words point to the mere nominal Christian, the man who unites to the outward profession of religion a decorous life, but is a stranger to true conversion of the heart to God. There is no character that should excite a more anxious compassion. The man is deceiving himself with a counterfeit, and that for his own eternity. He is like one setting forth on a matter of life and death, into a hostile country, with a forged passport. He is confident that it will carry him safely through the business, but, so soon as he

crosses the border, that very passport in which he trusts, will be the occasion of his being put to death for a traitor.

But the Lord goes on to say (vv. 2 and 4), "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die"; and again, "Thou hast a few names which have not defiled their garments." The great majority had the name only. But there were some who truly lived before God, though their life was feeble, and even a few whom the Lord is able to command. The Church as a whole, therefore, most directly represents the backslider; not yet altogether destitute of spiritual life, but almost dead. The case is that of the advanced, if not the last stage of the sickness of Ephesus.

Vv. 2, 3.—"Be watchful"; "remember how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast, and repent." Here are four distinct duties, each referring to the main thing, "the strengthening of the things that are ready to die." (1) "Be watchful." Look for the occasion of the decline anxiously and seriously, as men search for the hidden leak through which death is coming in. It is likely enough that the secret is some one wrong thing that you are not willing wholly to sacrifice. See ch. ii. 5. Or, the evil may be in your general life and conversation. There is nothing perhaps openly vicious, nothing that broadly announces itself as hostile to religion: nevertheless, you may all the time be taking in slow poison. I have read of a lady whose illness for some time could not be accounted for. Her health was failing gradually, and there was no apparent cause. She had the best advice, and various remedies were tried, but to no purpose. The decline went on

until the case seemed hopeless, and the end not far off. One day, as the physician was sitting beside her, he noticed, for the first time, the colour of the paper on the wall of the room. Suddenly, a thought occurred to him ; he cut away and carried home a piece of the paper, and found that a deadly, subtle poison had been used in the colouring. Here was the whole secret. The paper was of such a kind that minute particles would be constantly detached from it, and these, charged with the poison, and floating in the air, were slowly killing the patient. Her room was changed, and she speedily recovered. If you are not conscious of any particular besetting sin, see whether the mischief be not in the society you keep, in the pleasures which you allow yourself, in the way in which your leisure hours are spent.

(2) "Remember how thou hast received and heard." If you were in the years agone, much more fruitful than you are now, the very thought of it should both sting and encourage you to resolve, by God's grace, to be so again. You have experience to go upon, as well as God's promise, and experience worketh hope ; you have in your own self realized how true God is to His Gospel word, how really Christ is all that He is promised to be to the believing soul. And when the Lord says further (3), "Hold fast," I think that He means, "hold fast by that experience of yours." Say to yourself, "If when I was an enemy God reconciled me to Himself by the death of His Son, and gave me the new life within, will He not, in the same infinite grace and mercy which He showed me then, receive me graciously again, in spite of all my backsliding?" This is the true way to argue

with God, "Because Thou hast been my refuge, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." It magnifies God's mercy. It is saying that you do believe that the love of God in Christ is beyond all expression wonderful, that you do trust it against all that your shameful backsliding has most justly deserved. And God loves to hear this. He Himself again and again appeals to what He has done and what He has been, as a reason why the backslider should return. God "holds fast" by it; God remembers it; and, not as a reason why He will have no more to do with you; but to plead with you by it, to allure you by it, to encourage you by it. Do you hold fast by it too.

(4) But the discovery of the mischief must lead to its exclusion. "*Repent*;" this will probably be a hard thing. For the case supposed is far worse than that of Ephesus; sin within has been allowed to grow and to gather strength; temptation from without has been allowed to tighten its hold; the world perhaps has established certain claims; it is no easy task that is set before the man whose spiritual things are "ready to die," in this one word "*repent*." But it must be faced. Saved with or in that sin he cannot be.

And now, here is the main thing to which all these four duties lead, "Strengthen the things which are ready to die." How? By going back to the Fountain Head. What made you weak? My sin, you answer. Yes, but it weakened you by drawing away your soul from Christ. You had your life from Him. You must get back to Him, to have the life strengthened. There is a plant found in sandy deserts, and arid wastes, which is called *Anastatica* or

the Resurrection flower, from a remarkable power of recovery which it has. When it has flowered, its leaves drop off, its branches become dry and hard, and the plant in a little while, is seemingly dead. But so soon as it touches water again, it gradually expands, its leaves unfold, and life returns. It is a parable. If in its death-like state it is a figure of the backslider, its resurrection figures the alone source of revival ; he must get back to the Fountain of Living Water again.

"If therefore thou wilt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." Let who will comfort himself *in his backsliding*, with the thought once a Christian always a Christian, once a believer then certainly saved ; this is a wresting of the grace of God to a man's own destruction, for which he can never plead ignorance. God never says to the backslider, "Go on, and yet you shall be saved." God says, "Return or die."

V. 4. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis." The majority had but a name, the reputation without the reality. Yet, there were a few, of no "name" perhaps amongst men, but held in honour by the Lord, as His true people. The expression also seems to point to the individual, "He calleth His own sheep by name." Compare ver. 5. There is a modern philosophy which denies God's care for the individual. These my sorrows, yearnings, troubles and conflicts are, I am told, before God, but as the flutterings of one of the millions of the leaves of the forest, the movements of an atom which is not to be distinguished in the countless atoms of the mass of mankind. Not so the Scripture. Christianity emphasizes the individual. The

Gospel addresses itself to every creature, to every one of us. It tells of a Saviour who "tasted death for every man." It takes the poor indistinguishable atom, as the false philosophy calls the individual, and it says to him, "Thou art the man." "God loves you. Jesus died for you, calls you, cares for you. If you have received Him your name is in His Book, and you with all your concerns, are the object of His loving solicitude as if you were the one soul for whom He died."

"Which have not defiled their garments." The garment is the character of the inner man, as it is outwardly shown in the life and conversation; the manifested holiness of the Christian, clothing him as the summer foliage clothes the trees.

But how are we to understand the Lord's testimony that the garment had been kept undefiled? We have full answer in the distinct statements of St. John in his First Epistle. In the 6th verse of the 3rd chapter he writes: "Whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen Him, neither known Him." It is, as the tense of the Greek word (sinneth) indicates, of the habit of life that St. John is speaking, in this strong denial of sin in the Christian. The life of God, and the life of sin absolutely exclude each other. The two are essentially inconsistent. "In so far as a man is found in the one, he is thereby separated from the other." Sin to God's child is antagonism to his new nature and hateful to him. He cannot sin with the inclination of his renewed mind, with the purpose of his regenerated spirit.

Yet, this does not mean sinless perfection, as

some pretend. In ch. i. 8, the apostle declares, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He is writing to those whose sins had been forgiven, ch. ii. 12, and cannot therefore, be referring to the sinful state before conversion. Even more emphatically he writes in the 10th verse, "If we say that we have not sinned,"—not, "If we say that we did not sin before our conversion," but as the perfect tense indicates, "If up to the present moment, in our state as Christians, we deny that we have sinned,"—"we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." So then, the doctrine of sinless perfection is a fiction, which flies in the face of the plain assertions of God Himself. God's word upon the matter, and not here only but throughout Scripture, is displaced by the opinions of man. And it is a fiction most perilous in its natural consequences; for as it occupies a man so will it invariably blind him to his continual need of cleansing by the Blood of the Redeemer, and to the Righteousness of Christ, in which alone there is acceptance with God. Moreover, it is *schism*; not only from this party or that in the visible Church, but from the general consensus of the body of Christians of all ages and of all outward denominations. You may be sure that it indicates, not high attainments in the spiritual life, but most defective views of self, of sin, and of God. In proportion to growth upward in true holiness will be the conviction of sin. The nearer the Christian lives to God the more deeply will he enter into the experience of Job, "I abhor myself"; and of Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips"; and of St. Paul, "Not as though I had already attained,

either were already perfect"; and of our own Christian poet—

"They who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within."

And now, let us read what St. John tells us in the first verse of the second chapter: "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." "That ye sin not." Here, the tense of the Greek verb indicates not a habit, but an act. We are not to allow ourselves in any one act of known sin. We are never to say it is but a little thing, or, it is but once. We are absolutely to refrain from each and every thing that we know to be wrong. Perfection is to be our aim, if it cannot here be our attainment. "But if any man have sinned," when through the infirmity of the flesh, the spots of sin are upon the garment, what is to be done? The answer is, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," ch. i. 9. "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," ch. i. 7. When the spot appears, let there be immediate confession of the sin to God, and for His sake who died for our sins, plead for the promised pardon. And because there will be sin, day by day, whether we see it or not, there must be the daily washing in the Fountain open for sin and all uncleanness, as it is said, "They washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

Compare the ordinances for the cleansing of

the leper in Lev. xiv., they typify the Christian's duties in the pursuit of personal holiness.

Vv. 4-8. The two birds are a type of Christ in His death and ascension. He is now at God's right hand, in the midst of the throne, but as "a Lamb as it had been slain," interceding by His wounds, by the merits of His Atonement. And the first essential to holiness is trust in Him for it, who died for us and thus intercedes for us, and who by His precious Bloodshedding hath obtained for us the sanctifying Spirit.

Vv. 4 and 6. The priest was to take cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop, and with an instrument made of these to sprinkle the man: not without them. They point to the means of grace. God is a God of means. The means of grace are His appointment, and none may expect His grace who attempts to do without them.

V. 8. The man himself is now to be active. He is to wash his clothes, &c. So it is written, "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. Because God has promised to sanctify, and because sanctification is His work, we are not to sit still and do nothing; but, confiding in His promises, to make the earnest endeavour to forsake whatever we know to be wrong: to "work out our own salvation," because "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do."

Vv. 14-18. Blood upon the foot, the hand, the ear; and then the oil, upon the blood. There must be particular confession, and particular prayer for the pardon of sin, not only sin in general, but of separate and individual sin. And there must be not only prayer for sancti-

fication in the general, but in every particular item of duty, both toward God and man. And observe the sequence—the oil is to be “*upon the place of the blood.*” (*Vv. 17. 28.*) The blood first and then the oil: and oil only where the blood has been. Pardon first and then holiness; and the sanctifying Spirit given only where first the Atonement has been received.

V. 4. They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” There seems to be no reason why this should not be understood of the undefiled garment. The promise is of the habit of holiness, made perfect, and never more to be soiled with speck of sin. Science tells us that of all the many coloured objects around us each derives its colours from the light which falls upon it. That which reflects the red rays is red, &c., that which reflects them all is white. Christ is the Light; to “walk in white,” is to reflect all Christ, to be perfectly like Him, when “He shall be admired in all them that believe.” Let us not fail to notice the two little words which mean more than tongue can tell—“with Me.” “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” See John xvii. 24.

Is that your hope? The language of every true Christian is, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.”

Lord, it is not life to live,
If Thy presence Thou deny;
Lord, if Thou Thy presence give,
’Tis no longer death to die.

V. 5. “He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” This perhaps should be understood generally, of the eternal honour

and glory ; or, it may identify the overcomer with those to whom the former promises are made.

"And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." See ch. xiii. 8, where the full title is given ; and ch. xx. 15 and notes there. The promise here is of security. "My sheep shall never perish" ; they are "kept by the power of God." "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." See also John xvii. throughout.

This is the divine side. Let us not forget that there is also the human side. They who thus are kept, whose names shall never be blotted out of the Book, are they who overcome. It is to the Lord's faithful soldier and servant, who is manfully fighting against the world, the flesh, and the devil, that the promises of security are assured.

"I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." Observe again how the language points to the individual. One by one He will acknowledge His people, by name, as belonging to Him. Oh ! to hear that wonderful confession, "Father, this is one who trusted Me, who loved Me, who stood up for Me, who endured for Me, who fought for Me. Father, I will that he also be with Me, where I am." See Matt. x. 32 ; Luke xii. 8.

PHILADELPHIA.

Chapter III. 7-13.

THE few particulars which are known of the subsequent history of Philadelphia are in remarkable correspondence with the promises of perpetuity in the Epistle. There is a passage to this effect in the pages of Gibbon. "Philadelphia alone has been saved by courage *or by prophecy*. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a *column* in a scene of ruins, a pleasing example that the paths of honour and of safety may sometimes be the same."

Ver. 7. The key of David indicates the supreme power to admit, to open the door, as in the next verse. See Is. xxii. 20-23.

Ver. 8. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." The figure is frequently used in the New Testament, see Acts xiv. 27; 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3. Reference to these passages leads us to understand by the promise an opportunity for preaching the Gospel. Observe that the Lord evidently considers it a high privilege bestowed when He gives to any one the opportunity to speak for Him. What do you think of your opportunities? It would be a bitter disappointment to you if having obtained, at a very great cost and self-denial, a reward for one who had done you some trivial service, you should see that he did not care to take it

But is not that just what many are doing with their opportunities for the Lord's service?

Observe again that *more work* is the reward for work faithfully done. And if more work means more of God's grace, and more of God's glory; if it means a closer communion with Him and the being made the instrument for a wider manifestation of His name; if it means a larger capacity for enjoying God, when we enter into the joy of our Lord, and a greater ability for serving God in the higher offices of eternity,—is it not recompense infinitely beyond the value of the service for which, in grace, it is given?

Once more, observe that every opportunity for spiritual work is only and altogether of Christ. Let this keep us in humble, prayerful dependence upon Him in all our endeavours; for when He shutteth no human power can open. Let it quicken us to the faithful use of every opportunity for Christian usefulness; for it is a gift from Him of which we must give account. And let it encourage us to go forward; for when He openeth no human power can shut, and He who has called us to the open door will surely not withhold the necessary grace for the work within. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." How true the words are for every Christian in these days! There are open doors everywhere. At home and abroad there is work to be done, much of which is not done because the workers are too few. Let each of us resolve upon this question, and pray upon it: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Now we have the opportunity, but the night cometh when no man can work.

The Lord goes on to state the reason why He will confer this boon. "For,"—because—"thou

hast a little strength and didst keep My word, and didst not deny My name." "The little strength" may mean either that the church was weak in respect of numbers, wealth and influence; or, that she was yet young in grace, that her spiritual life and energy as yet were feeble. The point is that in her weakness the church was faithful. The Lord's word remains for those whose material strength is little, whose position in the world is comparatively low, whose circumstances are comparatively narrow. It will be always so with the vast majority; the uplands of life will never be reached by more than a small minority. Upon a very little reflection we must all allow this, and that, nevertheless, every one should do his duty in his position. But the reflection does not nearly always prevent or remove the latent thought "I can do so little for God, that I may as well do nothing." There are two amongst many other scriptures, which ought at once to cure such a misconception. The one, is in the parable of the Talents: surely it was to warn us against this very thing, that the Lord represents the faithless servant, who is cast out into the darkness, as the man who had but *one* talent. The other scripture is that encouraging assurance of the regard which God pays to the individual, in the humblest position, at the close of the parable of the unjust steward, "He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Here is one of the principles upon which the great Judgment will proceed. God's estimate of us will be, not from the number or the greatness of things done, but from the faithfulness which we have shown in our positions. Moreover, in these days, and at least in

this our favoured land, no Christian man need stand and work alone. The difficulty is, not where to find those who want us to work with them, but to determine which of all the many invitations is the most pressing and binding. And there is an immense power in the union of little things. The natural world abounds with illustrations. The mushroom which springs up in a night, is a soft small growth that the grasp of a child can crush ; but it is well known that a number of these tender and tiny fungi can force up stones of great weight, and actually hold them suspended in the air. A single grain of sand on the sea shore is an almost invisible atom, but it is by the collection of such little grains that the waves of the mighty ocean are kept back and whole tracts of country saved from devastation. It is just so in the world of human endeavour. Great things are seldom brought to pass by a few notable achievements, but usually by little duties faithfully performed, trifling in themselves, but far-reaching in their consequences. Says a thoughtful writer, "It seems very certain that the world is to grow richer and better in the future, however it has done in the past, not by the magnificent achievements of the highly-gifted few, but by the patient faithfulness of the one-talented many." This is probably true, and rightly considered is a stimulus to personal exertion. For, when the work is done, then, though it shall have been accomplished by the united exertions of many, yet, "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."

But the Lord's approval regards spiritual strength no less than material. "The Lord is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted

above that ye are able." But you are not told that because your strength is as yet but little, no temptations shall now assail you, and no duties be now incumbent upon you. "As thy days so shall thy strength be" is the promise; and the response should be, "Lord, as my strength, so by Thy grace, shall my days be." It is God's law, "To him that hath shall be given." To him that faithfully uses what little he has God will give more. It may be that you are wishing for some great opportunity, some signal piece of service, neglecting perhaps, the little duties which lie before you. I would say to you, God may have some such special service to which he would call you; but He will not call you to it if you are not fit for it: and it is by the faithful use of such strength as you have in your common, everyday duties, that fitness is to be acquired. We wonder sometimes at the endurance of those who have not counted their lives dear unto themselves for Christ, and perhaps we say, "Could I ever attain to such endurance? Could I die for Christ as they died?" But if you read carefully the history of one who has gone to the stake for the Master, you will find that that surrender of life was the outcome of a *daily* surrender to Christ; you will find that that act of self-denial was but the natural conclusion of a long series of self-denying actions for Christ's sake. Perhaps some one is ready to say, "I have been praying for more strength for a long time and my prayer has never been answered; I am just as weak as ever for this duty or against that temptation." But, let me ask you, Have you faithfully used the strength already given? Look at the mother teaching her little one to walk. She

puts the child down on his feet, then stands at a little distance, and invites and cheers him to come towards her. The little one runs a step or two, when, feeling his weakness, he cries out for fear. But the mother still steps back a little ; she wants him to learn to use his little strength, that so he may have more. Thus God trains His children. You are in want, and cry ; but you do nothing else but cry, and therefore God steps back a little. God withholds the answer, because He would have you use the little you have, in earnest, faithful endeavour.

Ver. 9. The promise of the open door includes the conversion of the bitterest foes. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even His enemies to be at peace with him." Compare Isa. lx. 14.

Ver. 10. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, &c." Not "My word of patience," but the word of that patience which is mine. The patience of Christ is His patience in the dispensation of His Word ; "long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. iii. 9. Compare 2 Thess. iii. 5, and see margin "the patience of Christ."

"I will keep thee from the hour of temptation, &c." It may be that he refers to the bitter persecution which the churches shortly after endured at the hands of Pagan Rome. It is certainly remarkable that of all the seven churches, Philadelphia alone escaped untouched. The reason for this assigned by the historian is, that the region in which the city stood was so subject to earthquakes, that the Roman emperor feared to trust his soldiers in the place. Faith sees the true reason in the Lord's word.

The promise remains for the church of all ages, as one of those promises which relate to the great tribulation which shall immediately precede the Lord's second Advent. Compare Luke xxi. 36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man." Of the day and the hour when that "temptation" shall begin, knoweth no man. But to the faithful it is repeatedly promised that they shall be "caught up" from before the face of it. See Isaiah xxv. and xxvi. 19-21; Dan. xii. 1-4.

Ver. 11. In harmony with the foregoing promises He adds the assurance of His near approach. But she on her part, must hold fast her attainments in grace, in earnest resistance against the foe. The Lord's promises were never meant to foster our carelessness.

Ver. 12. "A pillar in the temple of my God." The figure conveys the twofold idea of eminence and support. Compare Gal. ii. 9. We are familiar with it in connection with government. In every nation, society, family, the acknowledged and rightful head is indeed the pillar of it, bearing up the welfare of the whole.

It was man's original glory that he had the government of the creation laid upon him by the Creator. Man was God's own viceroy in the world, with dominion over all its creatures. He lost that position of honour by his sin.

The Lord Jesus Christ has repurchased it for man; and He will restore it to man, when the fulness of time shall have come. We cannot understand how it will be, yet we may be confident that in some real and actual sense the saints of Christ shall reign with Him hereafter.

And just as in some mighty empire even the most distant province has its chief officers of State, invested with the king's authority, receiving his commands, administering his laws, conferring his favours, and making known to the king all things within the province ; so in the world to come, there will be positions of authority and dignity and power, in which, invested and endowed by the King of kings Himself, the saints shall, under Him, and as His representatives conduct His administration of eternity. In that future state, when the whole universe shall be one great Temple to the Lord, they shall be to it and in it "the pillars" upon which He shall support its order and well-being.

"And he shall go no more out." The allusion seems to be to one of the customs of the Jewish Temple. The service was rendered by twenty-four courses of priests who succeeded each other throughout the year ; so that continually, one went out to give place to another. In the world to come there shall be nothing like this ; no going out from the Lord's presence, and no cessation from His service. No more doubt, nor cloud, nor fear, nor infirmity, nor weakness, nor weariness of the flesh ; no more sin nor liability to sin, to mar and spoil and interrupt our service, or our perfect communion with God.

There is yet further promised a threefold superscription : "I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, and I will write upon him My new name." What this new name of Christ will be it is vain for us to inquire ; it is expressly said of it in chap. xix. 12, that no man knew that

name but He Himself. There is probably an allusion in the promise to the frontlet of gold, bearing the inscription "Holiness to Jehovah," worn by the high priests (Ex. xxviii. 36). The promise seems to be that he to whom it is given shall bear some splendid visible tokens of his relation to Christ, in Christ's new and glorious state of eternal triumph ; and to God, as his God ; and to the heavenly city : tokens which shall declare to all, wherever his service of the King may take him, that he is a free man of the new Jerusalem, and a royal priest of God ; endowed with a power which none may attempt to resist, invested with an authority which none may venture to dispute.

LAODICEA.

Chapter III. 14-22.

VERSE 14. To this the last of the Seven Churches, the Lord introduces Himself by a title which is perhaps more grandly significant of His authority and power than any other in these epistles. This is perhaps because He is concluding the series, and therefore now sums up His own words concerning Himself : or perhaps it is because the state of this church, least of all the seven disposed to hear and receive His counsel, required the most emphatic call to attention.

Verse 15. "Thou art neither cold nor hot ; I would that thou wert cold or hot." It is good to be "zealously affected in a good cause," to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The "heat" is just this warmth and earnestness of living faith and love. The "coldness" cannot be a state of open enmity: this would be not a state of coldness, but of the heat of hell itself. The word finds its truth in those who have never been enlightened, never tasted of the heavenly gift, never been touched by the power of the Gospel. Between these two states of "heat" and "cold," there lies the mere formalist; the man who makes, and perhaps ostentatiously makes, his profession of religion, but loves the

world all the time, and means to keep on good terms with it, while he flatters himself that he stands well with Christ. This is the lukewarmness which the Lord rejects—the state of the loveless, lifeless, self-satisfied professor.

"I would that thou wert cold or hot." Why He should prefer the heat is evident enough. But why would He rather have them cold than lukewarm? He says distinctly that He would. In other words, He declares that a mere formal religion is worse than the absence of religion altogether. Why? Is it not because of the ruinous consequences of such a religion to the man's own soul? In natural things, it may be easier to pass into heat from a state of lukewarmness than from a state of coldness, but in spiritual things, the very reverse holds good. The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before the Pharisees. Probably there is not a minister who has had large experience in dealing with souls, but will tell you that the most hopeless of all cases are not taken from off the streets, but from out of the congregation; not from the ranks of the ignorant and irreligious, and absentees from the ordinances and means of grace, but from those who have heard the truth, perhaps for years, and assent to it, but have never truly received it. When you are dealing with the man of no religion, he knows at least this much, that you are offering him something of which as yet he has nothing; and when you are dealing with the immoral man he knows well enough that his sin is sin, which ought to be repented of. But tell the formalist to repent, and the answer is, Why should he repent? Offer him salvation, and he replies in effect, that he has it already.

I believe that it requires a special exercise of the exceeding greatness of God's power, to convict and convert a natural unconverted heart, when the man wears a covering of a false profession, which he thinks to be true. Every appeal seems only to help him to a stouter resistance. It is recorded that in one of the wars of the great Napoleon he came across a fortification hastily made of mud, which defied all his efforts to reduce it. Had it been built of wood, he could have fired it; or of rock, he could have shattered it; but it was a huge mass of mud in which his iron missiles stuck fast, and even increased its power of resistance. So there are who find a new satisfaction with self which hardens them yet more against Christ in the very fact that they have listened to His Word.

Verse 16. "I will spue," I am about to spue "thee out of my mouth." The words can mean nothing less than absolute and final rejection, such as is exemplified in the utter desolation and melancholy barren loneliness which marks the site of the once splendid and wealthy city of Laodicea. When does the Lord Jesus take us into His mouth? Is it not when He calls us, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And is it not when "long suffering to us-ward," He still pleads for us in our impenitence, that our day of grace may yet be lengthened out, as the vine dresser in the parable to the Lord of the vineyard, for the barren tree, "Let it alone this year also, till I dig about it and dung it"? So then, we may understand the warning as meaning for every mere nominal Christian, the time is short: yet a little while, and never again

shall you hear one of the invitations which have been sounded in your ears a thousand times in vain ; or, never again will you be visited by that Holy Spirit, whom you have all this long time resisted. And oh ! let us lay it to heart that it is not gross sin, not blaspheming atheism and avowed infidelity which is thus condemned ; but just the religion of the world ; that sham, spurious, God-dishonouring, soul-destroying religion which is becoming more general and more popular among professing Christians every day. A man cannot hold with Christ, and run with the world. He may deceive himself into thinking that he can ; but Christ says, " No : all for Me or none ; " " he that is not with Me is against Me." But if we choose to be *for* Christ, without reserve and without compromise, then we choose to be *with* Christ ; and this should be ample answer to every question about sufficiency. " With Christ," is it ? Then what needful thing can we possibly want ? " He that spared not His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not *with Him* also freely give us all things ? "

Verse 17. Literally, " Because thou sayest I am rich and am become wealthy, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and the pitiable one, and poor and blind and naked." That they were rich in worldly things we may well suppose, both from the language itself, and from all that history tells of the city of Laodicea ; and no doubt they were not without the self-satisfaction and self-laudation which usually is characteristic of those who have heaped to themselves earthly riches. But it is not only this, or chiefly this, that the Lord intends. These men thought themselves

to be as rich spiritually as they were materially, and they boasted of their imagined attainments. The Lord tells them the truth, as He saw them who sees all men and all things as they are. Ah! this is the true poverty, to be without pardon and without peace; without Christ and without God; without a hope that will bear the slightest investigation. And when a man thus poor is going out into Eternity, strong against every appeal, in the delusion that he is rich and has need of nothing, can there be a more pitiable object in all God's wide creation?

Verse 18. I counsel thee to buy of me—
(1.) Gold, and that tried in the fire, freed from all dross or alloy. Some understand faith to be intended, and others love. It seems better not to narrow the language to any such interpretation, but to understand it quite generally, of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." These are His, not only as given by Him, but as possessed by Him; and they are ours not only as received from Him, but as received with Him. In a real and actual sense the Lord Jesus Christ endows us with his own wealth. There was a half-witted man in company with a well-known millionaire. He had not a penny that he could call his own, but he had something of that shrewdness which is often found in such persons, and an idea occurred to him which he thus expressed—"Sir Samuel," he said to the rich man, "if you and I were to put all our money together, how much good we might do." The quaintness of the illustration (which is, I trust, no sin against the reverence never to be laid aside for a moment when speaking of holy things) may serve to impress upon the memory the true, the wonderfully true state of the case,

as it is with Christ and every sinner who takes Christ's counsel. You, who have not a penny of your own, not a spiritually good thing, not a right or title to the very least item in the kingdom of God—Christ invites you into partnership with Himself. It is written, "To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name," and so, "The Spirit itself beareth witness that we are the children of God;" "and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and *joint heirs with Christ*; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also *glorified together*." Again, "If we suffer we shall reign with Him." And again, the words are Christ's own words, at the conclusion of this epistle, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne;" and once more, "He that overcometh shall inherit ALL things." Compare ch. iv. 4.

(2.) "White raiment, that thou mayst be clothed." It is best to understand by this that righteousness of which St. Paul writes, "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philip. iii. 8, 9. Who may attain to this righteousness which is of God? It is "*unto all*." There is not a sinner upon this side of the grave who may not put in his claim to Christ of that name which no Christian would have blotted out of his Bible for ten thousand worlds, "The Lord our Righteousness." And it is "*upon all them that believe*." There is not a believer, though only to-day born again a new creature

in Christ Jesus, who is not at this moment so related to Christ that he is made the very righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. v. 21. "Such are we in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God Himself."* The day is coming when you must stand before God. What are you going to stand in? If it be not Christ, then yours will be the speechless silence, and the sentence, "Take him away into the outer darkness." But if it be Christ, then read Zeph. iii. 17. You may take it to yourself, sure that God will be as glad to see you in heaven as ever you can be to be there. He will joy over you with singing.

"And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." So God represents the "natural man." It is Christ's prerogative "to open blind eyes." God gave Him for this. He said Himself, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see." Read 1 John ii. 20-27, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The Holy One is the Lord Jesus, and the unction is the Holy Ghost Himself. Here is all the secret of saving knowledge,—the Holy Spirit, Christ's gift, enlightening the heart to know the truth. They to whom St. John is writing were afraid of falling away as they saw many apostates from their own company. But, says the apostle, "they were never of us." They were man-taught, ye are God-taught;

* Hooker.

they had head knowledge enough, but they never had what you have, "the unction from the Holy one." This is the "eye-salve" which the blind are to buy of Him. This is "the anointing which teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

But how can they buy who have nothing? There is irony in the language, but no mockery; He means it as it is written, "Come ye, buy without money and without price." Yet, to take His counsel will cost you something, and that is, in a word, *yourself*—self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-conceit, self-love. If any man will be Christ's disciple, let him deny himself.

Verses 19–22. There is an exhortation elsewhere which speaketh unto us as unto children, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." We are prone to do either the one or the other. Sometimes we "despise" the Lord's chastening, in the sense of refusing to hear the rod and Him who hath appointed it. God speaks when He strikes, but we pay no serious attention to the intention of the discipline. And sometimes we "faint" when we are rebuked of Him. We are ready to give up all for lost, to sink down in despair, taking the rebuke to mean that God has left us to our sin and its consequences. Laodicea could hardly have "despised" the Lord's most solemn and emphatic warning—"I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." But after such an exposure of her true condition, and such an intimation of judgment at hand, she may very well have "fainted." And therefore, perhaps, the wonderful words of grace with which the Epistle concludes. To the worst of

all the churches the best, if I may so say, of all the Lord's words are spoken. The very brightest hope is held out to those who had reason for the darkest despair. The highest glory is shown to be yet possible to the very lowest.

Verse 19. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The language is personally emphatic. "I for My part : it is My way, which is not as the weak and partial ways of men." I "rebuke :" the word used is the same as in the description of the work of the Holy Spirit, "He shall *convince* the world of sin." The "chastening" includes the "rebuke," but is much wider, extending to the whole discipline of personal afflictions; God's "education by means of correction." There may be some here with whom He is even now doing this very thing. Conscience is speaking to you of sin allowed ; and you have trouble and sorrow and distress, which perhaps you are referring to second causes, or for which it may be, you can see no cause at all. What will you do ? You may depend upon it that it is your wisdom to take yourself apart, and confess your sin, and ask Him to pardon it, and find His grace to enable you at once to give it up. For He has heavier sorrows, severer chastisements than any you have ever experienced. Why will ye be stricken any more ? "Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee." Sin no more, lest the worst possible thing should happen, and God should let you alone. It is an awful case to be in, that which the prophet describes, "Oh Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction : they have made their faces

harder than a rock ; they have refused to return." Jer. v. 3.

But this chastening is also for prevention. There is a beautiful similitude in the words of Hosea. "She said, I will go after my lovers, that gave me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them ; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them : then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now." (Hosea ii. 5-7). How often, and how mercifully and lovingly has this been acted out ! God hedges up the way of His wilful child. He makes it difficult, that he may not go on in it. Crosses and losses and disappointments shall prevent his coming into the things of the world which would be his ruin, till he learns how infinitely better it is to find his happiness in God. That is the meaning of many of our heaviest losses and greatest disappointments. They are evidences of Christ's love, who wants us for Himself, that He may bestow health and wealth and honour and prosperity and all good things, such as the world cannot give and cannot take away. "It wonderfully lightens the stroke," said one when asked how he could so patiently bear his affliction—"it lightens the stroke to draw near to Him who handles the rod." And not only so, but to draw near to Him is to draw near to the very satisfaction which we are foolishly, sinfully, vainly seeking without Him. "The worst that God ever does to His children is to *whip them into heaven.*"

And generally, Christ uses chastening to prepare us for the prepared place in the Kingdom. We are told of God's purpose, that we should be "conformed into the image of His Son." Now Christ was "perfected through suffering." He became a merciful and faithful High Priest by the things which He suffered. And we are here made meet for our future offices as kings and priests unto God, in the same element of suffering. There are some graces which cannot possibly be exercised except in circumstances of suffering. "I have heard," says John Owen, "that a full wind behind the ship drives her not so fast forward as a side wind, that seems almost as much against her as with her; and the reason is, because a full wind fills but some of her sails, which keep it from the rest; a side wind fills them all. Now our affections are our sails. If the Lord should give us a full wind and a continual gale of mercies, it would fill but some of our affections; but when He comes with a side wind—a dispensation that seems almost as much against us as for us—then He takes up all our affections, and we are carried freely and fully to the haven where we would be." We cannot know now the nature of the eternal service. It may be that it will require that ability to sympathize with others, in now unknown parts of God's universe, which is part of Christ's own fitness to be our High Priest, and which can only be acquired by suffering. But surely, it will require the full Christian character, in which every grace shall be developed to its perfection.

Verse 20. "Behold I stand at the door and knock," see Song of Solomon v. 2. The figure

has its truth not only in the appeals of Creation, of Redemption, of Providential dealings, of the Word written and preached ; but also in the personally present Holy Spirit of Christ, in every conviction with which the sinner is visited. Oh ! how near is Christ ! how marvellous His condescension ! and how great the sin of resisting, crushing, drowning in the things of earth those better thoughts of which we all are conscious !

" If any man hear my voice and open the door." Observe, He will not force open the door. On the one hand, no man can receive Christ into his heart without the preventing grace of God : on the other, that grace is promised to them that ask Him, and by that grace the sinner himself must admit the Saviour. They who exclude Him do it by their own deliberate choice and will. Christ is the world's Saviour ; the invitation and offer of salvation is to extend to every man ; but there must be the *personal appropriation* of this offer, the individual consent to the Saviour. He is ready, as it were, to put in His hand and draw back the bolts of impenitence and unbelief, but He says "If any man open the door :

" I will come in to him." The very essence of saving religion is Christ through the Spirit, dwelling in the heart, bringing every thought into subjection to Himself. " And I will sup with him." It will sometimes happen that when we have long failed to win another's heart by showing him kindness, we win it all at once, by persuading him to show some kindness to us. Christ condescends to this. He will have it appear that He will be indebted to us : He asks to be admitted as Guest ; that is to say, that we provide the supper for Him. And

there is a wonderful reality in this. When He is admitted, when the sinner is saved, He sees the fruit of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. He is gladdened by our repentance, and faith, and love, and poor expressions of thankfulness, and endeavours to please Him. He is not ashamed to joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

But He will come as Host also; for He says, "And he shall sup with me." The promise doubtless extends to and chiefly regards the Marriage Supper in glory, ch. xix. 7-9; Matt. viii. 11, xxv. 1, &c. But it tells of a present satisfaction and joy, in the possession of pardon, peace, holiness, and grace for every need; in a union with Him who only can satisfy the cravings of the immortal spirit, more and more realized, until we come to see His face and sit down with Him in His Kingdom.

Behold, a stranger's at the door !
He gently knocks, has knocked before,
Has waited long, is waiting still ;
You treat no other friend so ill.

If thou art poor, and poor thou art,
Lo, He has riches to impart !
Not wealth in which mean av'rice rolls,
Oh, better far ! the wealth of souls.

Thou'rt blind ; He'll take the scales away,
And let in everlasting day ;
Naked thou art, but He shall dress
Thy blushing soul in righteousness.

Art thou a weeper ? grief shall fly ;
For who can weep with Jesus by ?
No terror shall thy hopes annoy ;
No tear, except the tear of joy.

Admit Him, ere His anger burn ;
His feet, departed, ne'er return !
Admit Him, or the hour's at hand
When at His door denied you'll stand.

Verse 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." Here are two thrones. The one is the throne of the Father. On this, none can sit but God, and the God-Man. We remember how that He said "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John xvii. 5. Into that glory He has reascended. The glory is the same, but He is now Man as well as God; and the throne is henceforth "the throne of God and of the Lamb." The other throne Christ calls "My throne." This is the throne which has been given to him as the reward of His obedience unto death; and this He promises to the conqueror. Compare ch. ii. 27, iii. 12, xx. 6; John xvii. 22-24; Dan. vii. 22-27. What will be the order and nature of this share in Christ's kingly power it is impossible for us even to conjecture. The promise certainly is not fulfilled in this life, in any exercise of Christian influence in this world. It is a promise of reigning with Christ in the eternal glory of the world to come, and incomprehensible as it now is, it will be a reality.

It has been well observed that this, the highest and most glorious of all the promises, is not only because the victory over luke-warmness would be much more difficult than in any other case—though that is true; but also because of its occurring at the end of all the

Epistles, and as it were gathering them all into one. It also forms a connecting link to the next part of the book, the opening vision of which shows us the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the enthroned Church around it.

Let us, before we pass on, pause upon the seven times repeated description of him to whom these promises belong, "to him that overcometh." Every true Christian *must* be a man of war, from his spiritual birth. This world is the stage of an unceasing conflict between Christ and Satan. We often shut our eyes to it; we try to delude ourselves that it is not so, because we desire a life of ease and self-indulgence. But the Word of God, open it where you will, declares the world to be a great battle-field, whereon he who is not manfully fighting on Christ's side is in reality fighting against Him. There is no neutrality; fight you must. Choose the side of Christ, and by His grace, and in His strength, the victory is sure.

“THE THINGS THAT SHALL BE HEREAFTER.”

WE now enter upon this undoubtedly prophetic portion of the Book, The Revelation proper. The systems of interpretation may be arranged under the following heads:

1.—The Præterist; according to which the Prophecy relates wholly to the events of the first three Christian centuries, and has therefore been fulfilled.

2.—The Historical; according to which the Book is a continuous pictorial prophecy of Church history, from St. John's day until the end of this dispensation: the visions, therefore, have for the most part been successively fulfilled in the events of the last 1800 years, and are being exhausted in the events of our own time. The great text book of this system is the noble work of Mr. Elliott, entitled “*Horæ Apocalypticæ*,” the study of which cannot be too earnestly commended to those who would see God in the world's history.

3.—The Futurist; according to which the Revelation is a prophecy of events which immediately belong to and group themselves about the Lord's second Advent.

4.—There is a fourth system which may, perhaps, be best described as that of Indefinite Principle. According to this, the Book sets

forth, under its many figures, the continual contention between good and evil in its many varieties, and the certainty of the ultimate triumph of all that is good and true. The visions are indefinite, and set forth great principles. They refer to no events in particular, but are pictures which find their reality equally in many events. The Revelation is thus repeated from age to age.

The truth seems to comprehend each of these systems, but so as to subordinate everything to an ultimate and exhaustive fulfilment in the closing events of the present dispensation, and bringing in the Lord the second time.

It seems certain that the Book was intended to set forth the incessant struggle, which in every individual Christian soul, as well as in the world at large, is going on between good and evil. Men of all generations have found here strong consolation in their own personal trials and sorrows and conflicts, and in view of the mighty workings of sin and worldliness and the god of this world, against the cause and truth of Christ. Here the conflict is foretold ; its many variations of form are intimated ; the underworking and overruling hand of God in all things is revealed, and the final victory assured.

But the visions are so precise and vivid, and often so minute in detail, that it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that they point to definite future events, and are strictly prophetic of those events. And here let it be remembered that prophecy is seldom fulfilled all at once. It usually has two or more accomplishments before it is exhausted : events which God foresaw, and for which God has so selected the language of the prophecy that it

definitely predicts those events, and is accomplished in them. "There is," says Bacon, "a latitude which is agreeable unto Divine Prophecies, being of the nature of their Author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day; and therefore they are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishments through many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age." Thus is it with "the words of this prophecy." And so, probably, the *Præterist* is right in finding fulfilment in the early centuries of Christianity: but not right in confining the prophecy to those few years, and their wholly inadequate events. And so, undoubtedly, the Historical interpreter is right in claiming a fulfilment in the chief events of the history of Christendom during the last 1800 years. There is often such an agreement between the words of the prophecy and the events of the history, that it seems certain that the words were intended for a prophecy of the events, and that the events have been a fulfilment of the prophecy. But again, the Historical interpreter is probably not right in maintaining that the prophecies have been so exhausted that no further fulfilment is to be expected. The system breaks down again and again, and at some of its more important points. The interpretation again and again does not satisfy us. We are struck by the ingenuity of it, rather than convinced of the truth of it. The event adduced may to some extent be a fulfilment, but it is very far short of the prediction. For example, the Historical interpreter requires us to see in the revolutions which accompanied the overthrow of Paganism by Constantine, the reality of the vision of the

sixth seal! "A more notable instance of inadequate interpretation cannot be imagined. We all know what the imagery of that vision means in the rest of Scripture. Any system which requires it to belong to another period than the close approach of the great day of the Lord, stands thereby self-condemned." *

Again, the preliminary visions in chapters iv., v., are inconsistent with the Historical system as *exhaustive*. Not only do the magnificence and the peculiar solemnity of the scene lead us to expect much more than an obscure outline of Church history in the world; but we are shown a company of "elders," themselves enthroned around the Throne, who can only represent the redeemed Church in glory, and who are there (the language of description is very plain) not by anticipation, but *before a single seal of the Book with the seven seals is opened*, i.e. *before the prophetic visions begin*. That scene has never yet been set. The Church is not yet perfected in glory, crowned, and enthroned. And this must first be before the final accomplishment of the visions that follow that heavenly scene.

Therefore, while fully accepting the Historic system as an intended fulfilment, we look for the full accomplishment in the future. From the beginning of the fourth chapter onwards, the Book in its full and ultimate meaning, seems to be a prophecy of that mysterious and awful period yet to dawn, which under a variety of names has been spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began: "The Day of the Lord," "The Day of Judgment," "The Day of the Revelation of Jesus Christ," "The Great Day."

* Dean Alford.

It is more than probable that "That Day" will not be a brief period of some twenty-four hours, during which each and all of God's creatures shall receive his final destiny. The Scriptures frequently use the word "Day" to signify a period of time embracing many years. We read of The Day of creation, Gen. ii. 4; The Day of temptation in the wilderness, Heb. iii. 8; The Day of Christ, John viii. 56. St. Peter when writing of this very Day of Judgment, reminds us that "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2 Pet. iii. 8. And when we remember how many and varied are the events of the Judgment, it seems not only to be consistent with Scripture but to be required by Scripture, that we suppose the Judgment Day to be a prolonged period.

Of that period this Book of the Revelation appears to be in its ultimate meaning, a magnificent drama, its scenes extending throughout the whole, and concluding with a vision of the eternal state.

That Day will have its MORNING STAR, in the coming of the Lord for His Church, and their gathering together to meet Him in the air. Chapters iv. and v.

That Day will have its terrible MORNING, in the judgments of the last tribulation "that great one," upon the nations of the earth, in which the Lord shall lift the red arm of His vengeance on them that know not God and disobey the Gospel. Chapters vi.-xix.

That Day will have its NOON, in the Advent of the Lord to the earth and all His saints with Him, to wrest the purchased possession out of the hand of the usurper and take it to

Himself, therein to reign "before His ancients, gloriously." Chapter xix.

That Day will have its long AFTERNOON, in the Millennial reign of Christ, and the times of the refreshing and restitution of all things which He shall bring with Him. Chapter xx. 4-7.

That Day will have its strange unexpected EVENING, in the last brief permitted success of the Evil One. Chapter xx. 7-11.

But "at Evening time it shall be LIGHT"; the LIGHT OF THE GREAT WHITE THRONE. Chapter xx. 11-15.

And, then, ETERNITY. Chapters xxi., xxii.

And as in every other history, so here; the main narrative is repeatedly interrupted by episodes, which greatly help us to understand it, and are interesting and profitable in themselves. Moreover, the Revelation is not continuous. In any comprehensive and complete history it is necessary for the historian, having brought us to a certain point along a certain line of action, to take us back, and by another line of action in another part of the field, to bring us up to that point again. He may have to do this several times, in order that we may see the whole of the field, and intelligently observe its many and separated events. So in the Revelation. The sixth seal brings us close to the Advent. Then there comes an episode. And then, when the main narrative is resumed, we find ourselves not contemplating the Advent, but taken backwards; and then along another series of events, the judgment of the trumpets. After the sixth trumpet the process is repeated. And so again, and again.

Let us remember here that there is no antecedent improbability against the interpretation

of the prophecy, that it is in its ultimate meaning, a narrative of "the Great Day." A very little careful reading of Scripture will convince the reader that it is God's intention that the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ should be continually in his mind. The great argument of appeal from future things is not death, but the second advent. Very little, comparatively, is said about death; but whether the appeal is made to the godly or to the ungodly, whether the intention be to warn the wicked from his ways, or to nerve and strengthen and comfort and encourage the Christian, the grand argument is—the "Lord is at hand." To the one, "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"; to the other, the "flaming fire" and the "vengeance," when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.

Further, we know by experience how little is the influence upon us of anything of which we have only a general and superficial knowledge. It is in its details that it practically affects us. It interests us, moves us, it is realized only as it comes in upon us with the combined teaching of its various parts. Hence the great value of the Book of the Revelation. It is not *only* an indefinite fore-warning of the conflict between good and evil. Nor is it *only* the Gospel's appeal to the imagination, confirming its appeals to the heart and conscience. Nor is it *only* a prophetic history of all these centuries. It is also—and this is the "height or fulness" of it—a prophecy of the details of our Lord's return. It is not indeed all plain, neither is it all, or nearly all, beyond our understanding. Now, we meet with something which in the light of other Scriptures is quite intelli-

gible and full of consolation and help ; again, with something which remains a great mystery. But easy or difficult, it is by the humble, patient, prayerful study of these details that we shall realize the great event, and acquire the attitude towards it which the Lord enjoins.

And one may venture to say, and not be wanting in reverence, that no more fitting conclusion of the Word of God could have been arranged, than this setting forth of details, to arrest the attention, to awaken the conscience, and to subdue the heart to that glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

At a series of special services one of the reporters was a young Jew. He had not concealed his contempt for all that he heard ; but towards the close of the services his countenance and behaviour wonderfully changed : he evidently listened with glad eagerness. A gentleman who had observed him asked him the reason for this. "Oh !" was the reply, "I have found Christ !" Being further questioned, he said, "It is very strange, but *I found Him over my notes !*" In the close attention to what he had written, necessary for an accurate but condensed report, the Lord had revealed Himself. Let the man who is unable to receive the doctrine of Christ's personal return, closely and prayerfully study the details of this prophecy, and it is likely enough that "that blessed hope" will be revealed to him with its own peculiar joy.

PREPARATORY VISION.—THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN.

Chapter IV.

THE vision in this and in the following chapter is clearly introductory to all that follows. It takes us right up to the throne of God, and shows us who it is that rules in the world below, and controls and conducts every event in all the after scenes of conflicts, trials, and tribulations. It is the cheering revelation of the Personal Omnipotent God, ordering all things in this seeming confusion, after the counsel of His own will, constraining everything to the accomplishment of His own eternal purposes of grace.

They were terrible scenes of judgment which St. John was to behold and record. But this preliminary scene would nerve and encourage him through them all ; he could never forget it, and it would reassure him in the darkest hour.

Compare the vision in Isaiah vi. The prophet's mission was most disheartening and alarming. He was sent to those who would despise and ridicule his message and threaten himself with death. But Isaiah would remember the vision of his Master, and it would give him strength and courage for anything.

Compare also the remarkable narrative in 1 Kings xxii. Micaiah has a most unwelcome

message to deliver, one that would put his very life in danger. But he remembers the vision which he had seen, and the remembrance strengthens him when, standing before the anger of earthly kings, he has to foretell the death of one of them.

So now we endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The vision is for every faithful servant in his hour of trial. The God of that vision is on your side. You have His authority behind you, His Omnipotence engaged for you. And "if God be for us who can be against us?" We may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper."

Moreover, as in the vision there were "elders" in heaven, so "God *hath* raised us up (not only *will*) together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"—Ephes. ii. 6. The time is coming when we shall sit *with* Him, but even now we sit *in* Him, as safe against real harm as if there already, assured of the inheritance as if already in possession.

Verse 1, "Behold a door set open in heaven." The meaning is not that he saw the door opening, but that when he looked, a door into heaven stood open before him. So, we are reminded, Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The door into the kingdom stands wide open. We have access unto the Father, "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." "Wherefore, then, standest thou without?" if yet without.

St. John heard a "voice like a trumpet," which said, "Come up hither."

Read 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, and 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

This is the first thing that will happen when the Lord arises from "the right hand of God," to come again to the world; His own people,

raised and changed, will be caught up to meet Him in the air. It may be well to notice here that it does not appear that He will then immediately come to the earth with them. On the contrary, the Scriptures, which, while they exhort us to watch for the advent as possible at any hour, tell us also of intervening events as if they must first happen, seem thus to require a pause, an interval of some duration, between His coming for His saints and His coming with them. There are passages no doubt which seem to speak as if there were no such interval. Just as sometimes two mountain peaks when viewed from a distance, appear to be part of the same mountain and very close together, but are found as we approach them to be separated by a wide valley, so is it sometimes with the prophecies. There are prophecies of the Old Testament which speak of the events of the first and second advents of Christ as if they belonged to one and the same advent. Isaiah lxi. 2, is an example; we know now the long interval between the "acceptable year" and "the day of vengeance." So of the great mountain prophecy, "Behold He cometh," there are these two peaks, "The Bridegroom cometh, *go ye out to meet Him*," Matt. xxv. 6, and "The Lord my God shall come, *and all the saints with Thee*" (Zech. xiv. 5). May there not be an interval between this "*going to meet Him*" and this "*coming with Him*"? There are scriptures which seem to require it.

The vision of this fourth chapter represents, as we shall see, the preliminary gathering together to meet the Lord; and St. John hears the summons "Come up hither," not only as the Seer, but as the representative of the Church.

Vv. 2, 3.—Behold a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne, to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone. The jasper is a bright, white flashing stone, “clear as crystal,” and the sardine is a blood-red stone. May not the two combined be figurative of glorified humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, in and by whom the invisible essential Jehovah Himself is thus displayed?

“And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” Its predominant colour was green. The predominant colour of the earth is green, and the coming judgments are to fall upon the earth. And as the rainbow in the sky was and is God’s covenant token against the destruction of the earth by water—so this emerald rainbow seems to be a token of mercy, preserving the earth through judgments which are to be as if they would destroy it. The earth is not to be annihilated. It shall survive its fiery baptism; it shall perish only as the old world perished in the flood, and come forth purified and renewed.

Does not the rainbow round the throne speak to the believer, of personal safety in the darkest days and most discouraging circumstances?

Every trouble that comes to us comes from the throne, and it *passes through the rainbow which is round about the throne*; it comes from a covenant God. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Verse 4.—The word “seats” should be “thrones.” St. John saw “round about the throne four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Who are these? As for their number, some refer to the twelve patriarchs

and twelve apostles ; some to the twenty-four courses of the priests. However, they clearly represent the redeemed of the Lord in glory. They sing the song of redemption (chap. v. 9), and the crowns and thrones point to the glorified after-resurrection state. They are the Church of the first-born in heaven, in fulfilment of the prophecy just quoted (1 Thes. iv. 16, 17).

Verse 5.—The description indicates not a throne of *grace*, but of *judgment*. “The seven Spirits of God” are God the Holy Ghost (i. 4). But why as “seven lamps of fire”? The fire signifies the twofold action of God toward sin : of a *consuming* fire and of a *purifying* fire ; consuming to those who are not His people ; purifying in those who are. See Isaiah iv. 4 ; Mat. iii. 11.

Ver. 6.—The sea of crystal glass is indicative of God’s calm, clear yet unfathomable counsels ; “His judgments are like the great deep.”

“In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts.” The word “beasts” is an unfortunate translation—it should have been “living creatures.” Who are these? They are often taken as signifying animated creation, four representatives of which are given. But on looking at ver. 9, and at ch. v. 8, we find that the living creatures have the pre-eminence ; they lead the four-and-twenty elders. Here too, they are seen “in the midst of the throne,” while the elders are spoken of as being “round about the throne,” so that the former are nearer to God than the latter. Throughout the whole book this pre-eminence is given to these four. Moreover, they take an active and intelligent part as agents in the administrations of judgment (see chap. vi. 1).

Creation even glorified, far from satisfies the magnificent description of these living creatures and their functions.

There is another interpretation. They may represent a particular class, the highest order of the redeemed—the *elders* amongst the elders. We believe that God will give some special pre-eminence to some of His redeemed people. We believe that there will be degrees of glory and honour in heaven ; some will stand higher than others ; some will be nearer the throne than others. And in this seems to be the clue to the meaning here.

Turn to the similar visions in Ezekiel i. and x. The four living creatures there are said to be the Cherubims (x. 20), and their nature was evidently angelical. “They were represented to the prophet as supporting the Throne of Jehovah, attending His presence, like as the chief ministers of state might attend that of an Eastern monarch, carrying out their glances of intuition on every side into the dominions of their Lord, listening reverentially for His commands, going and returning on them like a flash of lightning ; in short, as the angelic intelligences admitted nearest to His own presence and counsels, and most confidentially employed by Him in His present providential government of the world.”*

Now, these that St. John saw were not angels, they belong to Christ’s redeemed ones, and as such join in the song of redemption, ch. v. 9, 10. But it was one of Christ’s assurances that they which should obtain that world, and the resurrection from among the dead, should be equal unto the angels—Luke xx. 35, 36. And it is declared by the apostle that God hath not

* Elliott : *H. A.*

put that world to come into subjection to the angels, but unto man, to the saints of Jesus Christ, in and with Him. Heb. ii. 5, 8.

May it not be then that these four living creatures represent the cherubims of the coming dispensation, the highest rank of the Church, admitted nearest to the Lord's presence and counsels, and most confidentially employed by Him in His administrations of that great Day?

They are full of eyes, before and behind, and within ; ever watchful, universally observant of God's will, seeing everything as it is, and the Lord's mind concerning it, as if the embodiment in the Church, of God's own omniscience, for God's service.

The mention of the six wings reminds us again of Isaiah vi. 1-4. "With twain he covered his face," as if unworthy to look upon God. "With twain he covered his feet," as if unworthy to stand before God ; and "with twain he did fly," ever ready to carry out God's commands. Here is reverence, humility and obedience. It were well if it were always remembered that Christian life is not all activity. In these days especially, of religious stir and contention, there is danger of thinking to use all the wings for "flying," of being so carried away with the excitement of active work, as to forget the exercises of reverential adoration of the Master and of self-abasement before Him. In the work itself, moreover, how easy it is to fall into self-confidence, and even self-worship, and to forget the reverence due to the holiness of God, which should never be wanting from the least item of His service. It has been well observed, that the characteristics of these four living beings unite to make a perfect picture of the spirit of

true service, brave as the lion, patient as the ox, aspiring as the eagle, intelligent as man.

Verse 8.—The ceaseless adoration of God's holiness is against the idea that these four are merely the representatives of animated nature ; as is the entire description of them, and the leadership which is assigned to them. It is true, that the song which follows in ver. 11, is a song of creation ; but this is in entire accordance with the interpretation that the vision is preliminary to the judgments of the last time, by which the Lord will pave the way for His return to deliver the *creature*, the whole creation, from its present bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom. viii. 19—22.

Verses 9—11.—It should be observed that the tenses in the original are not as in our Authorized version. The new Revised version translates better thus : “And when the living creatures *shall* give glory and honour and thanks to Him that *sitteth* on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders *shall* fall down and shall worship, and *shall* cast their crowns,” &c. The words point distinctly onward to the future, and to a repetition of the action and song of adoration for ever.

Let each of us ask, What if the trumpet should sound, and the cry be made *to-night*, “Behold the bridegroom cometh”? How would it be with me? It is no idle question. Thoughtful men cannot but see in them forewarnings of some great catastrophe, bringing in an order of things entirely new. Statesmen, philosophers, historians, men of the world, put forth their opinions, expecting some one, looking

for something, they know not whom, they know not what. But "we have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place ;" and many of God's dear people agree in believing that the Day is at hand, that even this our own generation may not pass away before strange lights in the heavens shall portend the coming dawn. The signs are being acted out in the world ; the events of the day seem clearly to correspond with those which, according to the Master, are to mark the beginning of the end. Seen in the light of prophecy, the world itself presents to the eye of faith that blessed hope, "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." In any one of these days or nights the summons may be issued, "Come up hither." Should I be taken or left? For, "in that night there shall be two in one bed, the one shall be taken, and the other left." One shall feel the touch of an angel's hand upon him ; and shall hear the words of an angel's whisper in his ear— "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Then, in a moment, he shall be away ; his companion shall awake in the morning and find him gone. So, in that day, "two shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Luke xvii. 34-37. It is the Lord's own saying. Soul of mine ! should *I* be taken or left ?

PREPARATORY VISION.—THE SEALED BOOK.

Chapter V.

VERSE 1.—What is this book? A most important question, for the whole of the Revelation up to the twentieth chapter, is covered by its seven seals; the seventh seal introducing the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet the seven vials. Some say that it is the Revelation itself, or an index to it; others, that it is the book of those truths which are exemplified in the Revelation, the principles upon which God governs the world, and now about to be strikingly illustrated in the succeeding visions. But it is to be remarked that nothing is read out of the book,—we are not even told of its being unfolded. Accordingly, it is suggested by others, that the visions represent not the contents of the book, but the gradual steps of access to it, and that the book itself is a revelation of the manifold wisdom and purpose of God, which He will make to the Church and to the angels in the final state of perfection, when the events of God's plan for this present dispensation are all past.

It certainly seems that the book is something to which access is obtained, and of which possession is gained by the things which the visions

signify, rather than that its contents are represented by these visions.

But is it a *revelation*? It should be noticed that it is as the Lamb, and as the Lion of the tribe of Juda, that the Lord Jesus takes the book and opens it. And it should be remembered that the descriptive names of Christ are always indicative of the particular kind of work which He is engaged in, or the particular circumstances in which He stands at the time. Now, He is here as "the Lamb" and as "the Lion of Juda," and neither "the Lamb" nor "the Lion" point to revelation. The former points to sacrificial atonement, and the other to kingly power. So, the book seems to relate to redemption rather than to revelation. To what redemption? The symbols of the Apocalypse are essentially Jewish, and a reference to the laws and customs of the Jews may help us here.

Read the account of the redemption of a piece of land in Jeremiah xxxii. 6—15, and observe in particular verse 10, 11. No Jew could alienate his inheritance from his own family in perpetuity; at the year of Jubilee it reverted to the representatives of the original owners. Meanwhile it could be pledged, and in this case agreement was made that at a specified time and for a specified sum, the owner who had so disposed of his inheritance might recover possession of it. But then, the heir for the time being, to whom the property would come at the year of Jubilee, had a right of redemption. He might at the time, and for the price named in the contracts, at once take the inheritance. And therefore, "For the manner of writing the contracts, he who was to buy the ground wrote two instruments, the one to be

sealed with his own signet, the other he showed unclosed to the witnesses, that they might subscribe and bear witness of that which was written. This the witnesses did subscribe upon the back of the endorsed instrument. And these two instruments were almost alike in all things, save only that in the sealed instrument something was concealed from the witnesses; the things concealed were these, the price of the land and the time of the redemption. These they concealed (for none knew these but the buyer and seller), in case that the *Goel* or next of the kindred knowing the time of redemption and the price, and the mortgager not being able to redeem it at the day, it was lawful for the next of the kindred to have redeemed it. These two being concealed, there was place still for the poor man to redeem his land.*

Thus, a sealed book may well have been a symbol amongst the Jews, of an inheritance which had passed out of the hands of its rightful owner, but might on certain conditions be redeemed.

Now, the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus extends not to man only but to man's inheritance also; this earth, which God gave him and which he lost by his sins. Our kinsman, has paid the redemption money, and He will give the lost inheritance back to us (Heb. ii. 5-10).

May not then this sealed book be symbolically, the titledeeds of man's inheritance, now about to be restored to him through the events of the visions that follow? Apart from any conclusion which may be drawn from Jewish customs, this seems to be the most satis-

* From "An Explication of the Judicial Laws of Moses," by Rev. John Weemse. 1662.

factory of all the many interpretations which have been offered. It is in harmony with the emerald rainbow round about the throne, and with the song of creation from the living creatures and the elders, ch. iv. 11. It accounts for the words of their song in ch. v. 10, "And we shall reign on the earth." And for the further ascription of praise from every *creature*, ch. v. 13; both of which doxologies are occasioned by the Lamb's taking the book to open it.*

Verse 1.—The book was sealed with seven seals, denoting the completeness of the forfeit. And no man was able to open the book, nor so much as to look upon it. Man has been allowed and enabled to do much in the world. The discoveries of science have given him a wonderful power over nature, but possession of the inheritance lost in Adam, the lordship over creation with which God endowed him, is proved to be beyond recovery by himself.

Verse 4.—St. John "wept much," because no man could open the book. This alone surely, indicates that the book was not only a book of prophecies. John would hardly weep much because he was not yet to know certain future things. But he might well weep at the thought that the lost inheritance was beyond recovery.

But his tears were but for a while. Notice the language. Ver. 2, "Who is *worthy*?" Ver. 3, "No man was *able* to open the book." Then, in ver. 5, one of the elders tells John that the *Lion* of the tribe of Juda hath *prevailed* to open the book; and in ver. 9, in the new song, they say, "Thou art *worthy* to take the book"; and the One to whom they say this is represented as a *Lamb*. As a *Lion* He is *able*, as a *Lamb*

* See further in Irving's Prophetic Works, *in loco*.

He is *worthy*. With the Redeemer is worthiness and strength. He would not wrest the earth out of the hands of Satan by His *power* only. No! the victory must be on account of His *worthiness* also. The Lord Jesus has paid the price of redemption; has satisfied the justice of God: and so obtained the right to take by force from the usurper. It is through His merit that He prevails. We frequently use the symbol of the lamb for gentleness. And there is a power in gentleness which authority cannot obtain. Gentleness can often do what force cannot. But, to a Jew, the lamb was a symbol of *sacrifice*, not of gentleness.

Elsewhere, this twofold aspect of the Redeemer is presented very plainly. In Philip. ii. 8, 9, the apostle speaks of Christ Jesus as humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "*Wherefore*" (one of the striking "*whereso*res" of the Bible), "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." Because He was the *Lamb*, ver. 8, therefore is He the *Lion*, ver. 9. Again, see Isaiah liii., "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." "*Therefore*" (*because* He was led as a *lamb*) "He shall divide the spoil with the strong," as the *Lion*. Once again, in Psalm xxii. the words to the end of 21st verse refer to Christ's sufferings; but at the 22nd verse there is a complete change: "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren," &c. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord." "For the kingdom is the Lord's; and He is the governor among the nations," v. 27, 28. What is this, but just the

twofold aspect of Jesus—first, the *Lamb*, then the *Lion*? Yes, and so now Christ *crucified* is the power; Christ fully, in all His offices, but always Christ that died. We may say, “Except I see the print of the nails, I will not believe” that it is the Christ of God.

Now look again at the vision. We see into heaven, and “Lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” The Lamb bore the marks of slaughter, and yet it *stood*; it had been slain and raised to life again. This is Christ as now in heaven for us; He who died and rose again for us, interceding for us by the merits of His Cross and Passion. He is “in the midst of the throne,” so that we may come boldly from every quarter of need, and to every side of the throne for grace; it is open to every one and for every promise, Heb. iv. 16. The vision indeed is of the future, but it represents also this ever-present truth—“We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He *is* the propitiation for our sins.” The essence of Christ’s intercession is what *He is* Himself, an offering and a sacrifice to God for us.

“A Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes.” The seven horns signify perfection of power—“All power is given to Me;” and the seven eyes signify omniscience; Christ knows all, by the Holy Spirit everywhere.

Verse 7.—And he came and took the book, &c. In chapter iv. 3 the One who sat upon the throne is described as being to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; a combination which seemed to point to the glorified humanity of Jesus Christ. It is undoubtedly He who

takes the book, yet there is no inconsistency of interpretation. The apparent contradiction is owing to the inadequacy of the figure, as any figure must be inadequate to represent the mystery of God manifest in Christ. It is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost who is seated on the throne, and is manifested in that glorified humanity. And it is from this triune Jehovah that Christ as Redeemer receives the seven-sealed book. It was to Himself as God the Son, no less than to God the Father and God the Holy Ghost, that He reconciled the world by His blood as Son of Man. And it is from Himself as Son of God, no less than from the Father and the Holy Spirit that He receives as Son of Man, the right to take possession of the earth for man.

The taking of the book is followed by a great commotion in heaven, and an expression of thankful praise that is without a parallel. The united representatives of the Church fall down and sing a new song, saying "Thou art worthy," &c., 8, 9. This new song provokes a song from the angels, of whose deep sympathies in all that concerns our redemption the Scriptures tell us. From an innumerable company there breaks forth the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," &c., ver. 12. And then yet another song, the song of all creation, already praising her Redeemer for her deliverance from her present bondage of corruption.

It is difficult to account for this treble chorus of praise at the taking of the book on the supposition that it is but an outline or index of Church history, or even a symbol of God's secret principles of government exemplified in history, or even of God's eternal purpose not to

be revealed until this dispensation has run its course. But, if the taking of the book means the beginning of the removal of the curse which sin has brought upon the creature, the rising of the Son of Man to wrest this purchased possession out of the grasp of the usurper, to renew the face of the earth, and therein to set up His own universal kingdom,—then, the repeated doxology has its obvious and adequate occasion.

Verse 8.—There is nothing whatever here to warrant the doctrine of intercession by the saints in heaven for the Church on earth. The elders and living creatures are themselves the completed Church ; and in their harps and golden vials full of odour, the praises of the Church of all ages for God's promise of the restitution of all things, and the prayers of the Church for its speedy accomplishment, are borne up for a memorial before the throne. See Ps. cxli. 2.

Verse 10.—Compare 1 Cor. vi. 2, and Rom. v. 17, viii. 17 ; 2 Tim. ii. 12, iv. 8. *Kings and Priests unto God, and to reign on the earth.* Not only is the present sovereignty of influence and conduct, of every true Christian intended. The expressions are far beyond the kingly power which, undoubtedly, there is now and here in the life of every true follower of Christ. They point to a future glory, future to us, but almost present in the vision ; and in some real and actual sense they to whom the promises belong shall wear the crown and occupy the throne with Christ. See ch. xx. 4, and notes there.

Verse 11.—Observe the order : nearest to the throne the living creatures, then the elders, and round about them the angels. The Church of Christ is the great manifestation of the perfections of God. Into its mysteries the angels

look with adoration and wonder. See Eph. iii. 10, 1 Peter i. 12. Unredeemed themselves they ascribe power and glory to the Redeemer. So often as they look at Redemption they are constrained to cry, "Worthy is the Lamb."

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And how should our lips reply "Worthy is the Lamb"! "For He was slain for us," and each of us may say "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*."

Verse 13.—See Psalm cxlviii. and Rom. viii. 19–23. The Lord who did bear our sins in His own body on the tree, did also bear the curse on the earth, symbolized by the crown of thorns. And therefore, "the creature itself shall be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Observe in this doxology of every creature, together with that of the angels and of the Church, the proof positive of Christ's coequality with the Father. How but for this could the two names be thus united? How could every creature in heaven and earth thus adore the Lamb if He were but one of themselves?

Verse 14.—The song of praise dies into the silence of adoration too deep and too intense for words.

Historical interpreters regard the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures as symbolic representations specially of the Church in *Paradise*, but also of its branch militant here on earth. But the thrones and crowns, and the white robes, and the description of place, and the whole particulars of the vision, point to the resurrection and to a consummation of glory everywhere in scripture reserved for *That Day*.

THE OPENING OF THE SEALS.

Chapter VI.

INTERPRETERS who see in these visions no more than pictorial illustrations of broad general principles, tell us that the seals unfold the recurring characteristics of the world's history during this dispensation, since Christ's ascension. There was a possibility of a universal righteousness and peace through the general acceptance by mankind of the gospel facts and doctrines. But the refusal of the great majority, and the half-heartedness of many even in the Church, would prevent this. And only through the continued consequences, of sin, war and famine, disease and death, only through trial and tribulation, with their lessons, would the end be reached.

This may be readily accepted, but surely not as a full satisfaction of the visions. We cannot but look for something more definite.

Historical interpreters refer us to the history of the Church, as it stands related to the latter glories and the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, from the era of the Emperor Nerva, A.D. 98, to the overthrow of Paganism and the establishment of Christianity under Constantine, as the religion of the Empire, in the fourth century.

That the visions have this application can

hardly be denied. The agreement between them and the history, often in minute particulars, is very striking.

But as in the Lord's own great prophecy in Matt. xxiv., there is undoubtedly, a twofold reference, first, to the destruction of Jerusalem, and ultimately, to His coming again ; so is it here. The visions have received no more than a partial fulfilment in the events of the past ; the fulness of their meaning is yet future, and will be found in the events of judgment immediately preceding the Lord's second advent.

In chapter iv. we are shown the Church in heaven, caught up, as in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. Chapter v. tells us of the taking up of the title-deeds. Now, we begin to hear about the judgments that follow, in the interval between Christ's coming *for* his people and his coming *with* them.

Verse 1.—The Lamb breaks the seal, and then the judgment comes. So now, and it ought to be a comforting thought to us, whatever happens, there is no chance in it ; the Lord doeth it ; not until *He* breaks the seal does any judgment come ; “It is I, be not afraid.”

The command at the end of the verse “Come and see,” is as if addressed to St. John. But the words “and see” should be omitted ; and it is not St. John who is told to “come” for see ch. iv. 1, 2. The command is given to the *horses and their riders*, that they are to come and do their part. Notice also that the command “come” is not given by the Lamb, but by one of the “living creatures.” The Lord's people shall be associated with Him, and take part with Him in His action of smiting the earth with the judgments of the last times.

We know that God of old made use of the instrumentality of angels to accomplish His purposes. The law was given from Sinai, as if directly from God; but we read in Acts vii. ver. 53, that the law was received "by the disposition of angels"; when the host of Sennacherib was destroyed, we are told that the angel of the Lord smote the Assyrians; many other instances are recorded. But "unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the *world to come.*" But One in a certain place testified "What is *man*, that Thou art mindful of him?" Heb. ii. 5. So we are told in 1 Corinthians vi. 2, that the "saints shall *judge* the world," see also Psalm cxlix. 3-9; Rev. ii. 26-27. Such honour have all his saints; but "the living creatures" take the pre-eminence and initiative.

Let us compare the chapter with the Lord's prophecy of His coming and of the end of the world, in Matthew xxiv. He there gives to His disciples certain signs of the last day. A close agreement between those signs and the visions of the seals is observable.

The first sign given is the appearance of false Christs, vv. 4, 5. "Many shall come in My name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many." After the opening of the first seal we read of the white horse and its rider, who went forth conquering and to conquer; and if this is not Christ, it certainly is Antichrist, a mighty victor, pushing his conquests everywhere, counterfeiting while really opposing Christ, in everything.

The second sign is that of "wars and rumours of wars," nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, vv. 6, 7. After the opening of the second seal a red horse

appears, "and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another."

Christ next says there shall be famines, v. 7. The third horse mentioned is black, "and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand, and I heard a voice say, A measure of wheat for a penny," &c. Does not this indicate famine?

Christ then speaks of pestilence, which is the natural outcome of war and famine, v. 7. When the fourth seal is broken, St. John sees a "pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death."

The fifth sign that Christ gives is that of martyrdom, v. 9. After the opening of the fifth seal, St. John says: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

Once more, Christ tells His disciples that immediately after the tribulation of those days, "The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn," &c. So, when the Lamb had opened the sixth seal, "Lo there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sack-cloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, &c."

We may suppose that the action of the white horse continues all through the time of the following horses; and that the other horsemen eventually, ride together. In ver. 8 there is evidently a combination of the horrors produced by at least the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. These three

appear subordinate to the first, who seems to be an individual, and to whom, distinctively, a crown was given.

First Seal.—As we have noticed, the white horse and its rider may signify the Antichrist of the last day. The going forth “conquering and to conquer,” and the *white* horse, point to victory. So, the Antichrist of the last times will obtain world-wide power. Moreover, the Antichrist will be filled with the devil’s power; a man possessed with the Evil spirit, as Jesus was possessed with the Holy Ghost; he will be the incarnation of Satan as Jesus Christ was God incarnate; he is to counterfeit Christ in every way. Therefore, all the imagery of Christ, the bow, and the crown and the white may be used of him. We shall presently see that the first event upon the earth after the rapture of the Church will be the revelation of the Antichrist, the Man of sin, ch. xiii.

To some, however, the expression “conquering and to conquer” seems to imply final and permanent victory, such as is Christ’s only. They therefore interpret this white horse and its rider to be some special putting forth of God’s power in His Gospel, at the beginning of the last tribulation.

The interpretation is not without probability.

If Christ should come to take His Church now, what would be the effect upon the *nominal* Christians, those who are perhaps serious, and may care for religious things, but have no *personal* interest in Jesus Christ? Might they not awake to the reality of their position, and with “hearts failing them for fear,” seek salvation earnestly? Might there not be some special putting forth of God’s power in

Christ, and so, some extraordinary revival of religion, by which multitudes would be saved, though perhaps to suffer death for their faith?

There are scriptures which seem to point to this. In chap. vii. (where see note), a great multitude is spoken of, who stand before the throne clothed with white robes, and one of the elders says of them that they have "*come out of great tribulation* (the great one), and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And again, in verse 10 of this 6th chapter, we read that the souls of them that were slain cried, "How long, O Lord, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood?" And it was said unto them, "That they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that *should be killed* as they were, should be fulfilled." This is said *after* the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord. See also Isaiah xxvi. 9: "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Again, Daniel xii. 10, "Many shall be purified and made white and tried"; at the beginning of the chapter the time is described as "*a time of trouble* such as never was since there was a nation."

Do not these scriptures indicate that there will be many who will be brought to God through the terrible tribulation that is to come upon the earth, and who will lay down their lives for His sake? We shall presently see more clearly that this will probably be so; and it may be, as some think, that this putting forth of Christ's saving power is symbolized by the white horse and its rider who went forth "*conquering and to conquer*." In Matt. xxiv. 14, Christ seems to refer to some final proclamation of the Gospel at the

time of the end. See also Rev. xiv. 6, and note there.

The Second Seal.—St. John hears the living creature say "Come," and a red horse appears, and power was given to the rider to take peace from the earth, and a great sword was given unto him. No explanation is required of this seal, it can only refer to bloodshed and war.

The Third Seal.—Famine naturally follows warfare; war preventing husbandry of the earth. The horse in this seal is black, and the colour alone indicates famine. Compare Lamentations v. 10, and Jeremiah xiv. 1, 2, where the word black is used in connection with dearth. The rider on this black horse had in his hand a pair of balances; and that also is a symbol of scarceness, when food is scarce it is necessary to weigh it carefully. In Ezekiel iv. 16, we read of meat being so eaten, "They shall eat bread by weight, and with care." St. John hears a voice saying, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." A penny was a day's wages, so that the expression may mean that the common necessities of life were so expensive that a man could buy nothing else; he would have to give his day's wages for his bread. "See thou hurt not the oil and the wine." We know that wheat requires great care in cultivation; it cannot be left to itself, it has to be attended to; but the olive and the vine grow wild, they require comparatively little attention from man. The former therefore would naturally first fail in the times of war and trouble. Yet wheat and barley, and oil and wine, are alike the gift of God. We sometimes speak and think

as if the produce of the earth were the effect of mere law, and take it as a matter of course that we have harvest succeeding harvest; whereas we should ever remember that God's hand is underneath it all. There is abundance or scarceness as He decrees. The oil and wine mentioned here may be taken to represent the *luxuries* of life, as the wheat and barley represent the *necessaries* of life. Very often when men despise, or are not contented with the common necessities, God punishes by letting them have their own way, until those very luxuries which they have desired, become loathsome to them. We have an instance of this in Numbers xi. The children of Israel lusted for flesh, despising the manna, and God sent them what they wanted; but we read in ver. 20, "Ye shall eat of it a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you."

Fourth Seal.—A pale horse, the *livid* hue of approaching death. The rider is the King of Terrors himself, attended by a personification of hell, the place of departed spirits, ready to sweep away the dead. God's four sore judgments are here, see Ezekiel xiv. 21. This is, perhaps the most awful of all the seals, and reminds us of Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

Fifth Seal.—"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God." The reference here is probably to the altar of sacrifice, Lev. iv. 7. There was some receptacle at the foot of it, into which the priest poured the blood of the animal; and as the blood is the *life*, the idea would be that this receptacle was the place where the animal's life went. God uses this figure when showing the apostle the

vision of the souls of them that had been offered up in the sacrifice of martyrdom. Notice that these souls are represented as crying out with a loud voice: the state after death is not a state of sleep or unconsciousness, as some suppose. "How long, O Lord, dost Thou not *judge* and *avenge* our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It cannot be that these martyrs were crying for mere vengeance—but they know that judgment must come upon those who had slain them, and they cry that God would hasten those events which would release them from their imperfect state. Yet, does not their cry represent the fact that every wrong of itself cries out to God for its just punishment?

"White robes were given unto every one of them." Probably these are not the white robes of chs. iii. 4, 5; xix. 8, but some special contenting assurance of God's full favour: an additional boon for their waiting time. God has accepted them; they are honoured and in a state of bliss, though not perfect bliss, and they are assured of the perfection, and that it would only be for a "little season" that they must thus wait. Observe, white robes were given unto *every one* of them. Throughout the Bible, but especially in Revelation, we notice the promises and assurances to the *individual*: "To *him* that overcometh," "Be *thou* faithful unto death," "I know *thy* works," and many others. We are too apt to forget the individuality of the promises, and thus we lose much of their sweetness. So, at the Great Day, God will deal with us individually. "*Everyone* of us must give account of himself to God." "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to *every* man according as his work shall

be." Compare the parables of the wedding-garment and the barren fig-tree.

In the fifth seal vision no horse is mentioned, and there is no intervention of the living creatures. Why is this? Is it because this seal represents the martyrdom of God's own people, and that the glorified Church could not be represented as summoning persecution upon those who were to die for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held?

Sixth Seal.—An awful picture of the very eve of Christ's second coming—the fulfilment—the grand fulfilment—of Matthew xxiv. 29 and 30. In ver. 16 notice the expression, "the wrath of the Lamb." The words are most terrorfule. It is not the wrath of the *Lion*, but of the *Lamb*. It is as if all His love had been changed to wrath; all that He has done and is doing now for us in love, will have its corresponding measure of wrath. And in the day of that wrath "Who shall be able to stand?" We find the same question in Malachi iii. 2, "Who shall stand when He appeareth?" The answer we may find in Ephesians vi. 13, "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand, &c." And again, in 1 John ii. 28, "Little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." These things are realities, and they are realities which we shall see, not as mere spectators, but as having our own share and part in them. "What is our preparation?"

I once had occasion to speak with a man who had remained with others for conversation, at

the close of the service. I asked him if he knew the Lord Jesus. He gave me, almost fiercely, this answer, "*I don't like him,*" adding before I could reply, "*and that is because I am such a scoundrel.*" He went on to tell me that he had been in prison, and was the slave of drink. Glad indeed was I to tell him that the One whom he did not "like" was the friend of sinners, Jesus, who loved him, who died for him, whose Blood cleanseth from all sin, and who is able to save to the uttermost. But his answer made me think of the cry of the lost, conscious of their guilt and sin and shame, "*Hide us from His face.*" Oh ! make sure of your interest in His Blood by personal believing. "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*" Behold Him in faith, while yet you may, as the Propitiation for *your* sin ; lest suddenly, your day of grace come to an end, and the agonized cry break forth in vain from your lost and despairing spirit to the rocks and mountains, to cover you from "*the wrath of the Lamb.*"

THE EPISODES OF THE SEALING OF A JEWISH ELECTION, AND OF THE PALM-BEARING MULTITUDE.

Chapter VII.

LET us remind ourselves of the structure of "The Revelation."

The great event is the Lord's second advent in glory, "Behold He cometh." We have three distinct series of judgment actions; the vision of the seals, of the trumpets, and of the vials. Each of the three runs along its own distinct part of the field of the history, but they all have a common ending in the Advent itself.

And this, the general history, is interrupted by episodes. Supplementary visions are interposed from time to time, greatly helping us to understand the whole.

The concluding vision of the 6th chapter, the sixth of the seals, has brought us close to the Lord's coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on all that know not God and obey not the Gospel. As yet, however, we have seen but one part of the field. Presently the writer will take us through a series of actions in another part, in the visions of the trumpets. But before doing this, he turns aside from the main narrative to a twofold episode in this 7th chapter.

(I) THE JEWISH ELECTION.—The sealing of the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel. It is maintained by some, that they represent the Church of Christ of all ages and all peoples. The twelve multiplied by twelve a thousand-fold representing the growth into full numbers of the elect of God. An answer against this as the *full* accomplishment of the vision, is found in the interpretation of the previous chapters. If the elders and the living creatures represent the completed Church in glory (and of this few commentators, if any, seem to doubt), then, as we have already noticed, the Church is completed, and in heaven before a single seal is opened, *i.e.*, before the first of the judgments signified by the visions of the prophecy in its full and ultimate meaning. It seems an inadmissible interpretation that these 144,000 are that same Church, preserved by the seal of God against *coming* judgments, except, indeed, upon the supposition that the prophecy is no more than a series of general pictures of Christian trial and conflict, and the Lord's safe keeping of His Church unto a final victory, without any definite and particular reference, even in its final accomplishment.

The rejection of the literal interpretation, that the sealed ones are *Jewish* Christians, literally children of the Twelve Tribes, is to be referred to the habit of explaining away the Bible language concerning Israel, or rather of giving it a purely spiritual meaning and applying it inclusively to the Church in general. Doubtless, Israel is a type of the Church, and God's dealings with that people are typical of His dealings with the Church. Further, it is most true that "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. iii.

28), no distinctions of race, all are chosen of the Father, born of the Holy Spirit, justified by faith in the Lord our Righteousness. But the question is, has God done with Israel as a distinct nation? and if not, how will he deal with her? To these questions prophecy seems to give distinct and repeated answers.

God has not done with Israel as a nation. "He that scattered Israel will gather him."—Jeremiah xxxi. 10. "The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people."—Isaiah xi. 11, 12. "Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, and bring them into their own land, &c."—Ezekiel, xxxvii. 21, 22. See also Jeremiah xxx. 3; Hosea iii. 4, 5; Joel iii. 20; Zephaniah iii. 14, &c.; Zechariah x. and xiv.

How can these and many similar prophecies in the true meaning, refer to anything but the restoration to their own land of the Jewish people, and their conversion as a nation to the God of their fathers, through the Messiah of their own scriptures?

"Where," asks Bishop Ryle, referring to such prophecies, "where in the New Testament shall we find plain authority for applying the word Israel to any one but the nation of Israel? I find none." And, again, he says, "Two points (of unfulfilled prophecy) appear to stand out as plainly as if written by a sunbeam. One of these points is the second personal advent of our Lord Jesus Christ before the Millennium; the other is the future literal gathering of the Jewish nation and their restoration to their own land."

In what condition will they be restored, and

what will be their future? Scripture in part answers these questions also.

It is intimated that they shall be restored in an unconverted state. See Ezekiel xx. 42; xxii. 19, &c.; xxxvi. 24, 25.

They shall form alliances with other nations, notably, with the great Antichrist himself, They shall be deceived and oppressed by him, and experience a tribulation unequalled even in all their own history. Read carefully Isaiah xvii., xviii.; Daniel viii. 19, &c.; ix. 24, 27; xi. 21-45; 2 Thess. ii. 4.

Suddenly, in a moment, when all seems lost, their deliverance shall come, the great Deliverer Himself shall appear, with all fulness of victory. Daniel xii. 1; Hosea i. 7, 10, 11; Zechariah xii., xiii., xiv. And then shall the nation be born in a day. All Israel's tribes shall recognize and adore as their Messiah, the Jesus whom they rejected and slew. Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the world, and the Jews the great missionaries of the Gospel to all nations, throughout the millennial age. Read Isaiah xxvi. 1, 2; llii. 9, 10; lxvi. 19; Jeremiah xxxxi. 33; Zephaniah iii. 13-20; Zechariah viii. 20, &c.; xiv. 20, 21; Romans xi. 12, 15.

These scriptures seem to be the best possible commentary upon this vision of the sealed thousands of Israel. The time for God to remember His ancient people is at hand. The judgments which in the last days shall be poured upon them are about to descend, judgments such "as never have been since there was a nation even to that same time." But "at that time shall thy people be delivered, *every one that shall be found written in the book.*"—Daniel xii. 1.

There will be some who, renewed by the

Holy Ghost, penitently bewailing their own and their nation's sins, and refusing allegiance to the Antichrist and compliance with the awful abominations of that fearful time, shall be the objects of his most bitter persecutions; nevertheless, by the secret seal of God preserved, and kept—the nucleus of the saved and converted nation. See chapters ix. 4; xiv. 3, 4. May they not be "these my brethren" of Matthew xxv. 40? Persecuted, afflicted, hunted through the world, they will probably be; though kept by the power of God throughout that tribulation, and at last delivered at the coming of Christ, and honoured as the first-fruits of all Israel, saved unto God and the Lamb. And may not kindness shown to them be the test by which the Lord will determine who among the heathen are worthy, are fit, to receive the Millennial Kingdom? "Before Him shall be gathered all nations," "all the Gentiles," as the original is. Some of these have been predestined to the glory and happiness of the Millennial Kingdom from the foundation of the world, and as the time draws on, may not God signify this His choice of them by a spiritual influence, inclining them, at their own no small personal risk, to kindness to the Jewish sealed ones, scattered and persecuted among them? See Joel, ii. 30, 32, and notes on Rev. xiii.

Verse 1. The four winds of judgments are ready to blow, but they may not until God's servants are sealed. So the angel to Lot, "Haste thee, for I cannot do anything until thou be come thither." And so always. Read Psalm lxii.

Verse 2.—The sealing angel rises from *the East* according to his mission of light for the

righteous in the hour of darkness, and of joyful gladness to the true-hearted.

Verse 4.—To be literally understood. The tribe of Dan is omitted, an omission generally accounted for by the fact that this tribe was the first to fall into idolatry (*Judges xviii.*).

The number twelve is completed by the addition of Manasseh, Joseph also being mentioned representing Ephraim, whose name is not given.

It has been observed that the omission of Dan is a silent, emphatic comment on the warning, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

The intention of the sealing can only be exemption from the coming judgments. See ch. ix. 4, and *Ezek. ix.*

In the Historical system, the twelve tribes of Israel, and the 144,000 taken out of them represent respectively, the visible professing Church, and the true Church of Christ taken out of it. The latter are considered identical with the palm-bearers of the following vision. The chapter is taken to prophesy the early apostacy from the true faith of the Christianized Roman Empire, the consequent infliction of severe judgments upon it, and the preservation of a faithful few through all these trials, unto their final happiness in heaven. It is, however, difficult to identify the 144,000 out of Israel with the unnumbered multitudes of all nations. And there is really no scriptural warrant, as we have before noticed, for saying that Israel does not mean Israel but the professing Church.

Moreover, there is in Church history no ground whatever for the hope that so large

a number—"a multitude whom no man could number," were added to the true Church of Christ at the early period to which the vision is supposed to refer.

But there ever has been, and is now, a "sealing" of God's people; and none are God's people who are not partakers of it. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed, &c." Eph. iv. 30. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal the Lord knoweth them that are His: and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. ii. 19. The seal is the gift to them of the Holy Ghost Himself, to dwell in them, bringing them into conscious fellowship with the Father, working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is a seal which secures them for ever, and it is a seal which is secured to them for ever, by the eternal love of the Father, by the infinite merit of Christ, and by the mighty working of that Blessed Spirit Himself. Let young Christians remember this side of the truth, as well as the other which speaks of the character of them that are kept. Every true child of God is bound up in the bundle of life by the threefold cord of God's love, Christ's merit, and the Holy Spirit's power.

(2.) The 9th verse introduces another episode, that of THE PALM-BEARING MULTITUDE.

St. John sees a great multitude which no one was able to number, of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and with palm-branches in their hands. Who are these? Are they the same as the 144,000? Some have thought so, and that whereas the numbering of the previous vision is

an assurance of the *individual* safety of God's true people, the unnumbered multitude indicates the wide growth of Christ's Church ; the universality of it, embracing "Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free"; the harvest of the world, in which the Lord Jesus shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. The language may be accommodated to this, but this can hardly be the truth which the vision is intended directly to teach.

Let us take the elder's answer to his own question, "What are these?"—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

It is more correctly, "These are they which are coming out of THE great tribulation," or "out of the tribulation the great one." The expression is most emphatic. It may, no doubt, be used of the age-long tribulation through which the Church of Christ passes to her rest, as it is said, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." But the emphasis of the definite article surely indicates also a special and peculiar tribulation. It is the great judgment trial of the last days that is intended : "There shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

And this palm-bearing multitude "came out of it"; they are not exempted from it, they pass through it, or rather enter into it and suffer its worst severities even unto death. They were not ready for the Lord's coming; but now, they have turned, and repented and believed, and in most cases have died the martyr's death.

Read again the vision of the souls under the altar, the 5th seal, ch. vi. 10. Here are some of "the great multitude," slain for their testimony. Notice their cry, "How long, O Lord?" and what is said to them, that they must "rest for a season until their fellow-servants and brethren that should be killed, should be fulfilled." The episode before us is the *fulfilment* of the saying, or a near approach to it. It reminds us of the countless members of the Church of Christ, from every age and every nation, through much tribulation entering into the kingdom; but in its true meaning it tells of the martyrs of *the* tribulation, the great one.

Verses 9, 10.—They are clothed in the robes, and bear the emblems of victory. But they say, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb." It is all His, and His only the praise of it. We may ask how can they have any true hope of joining in the chorus of heaven who, despising or neglecting Christ, would climb up some other way? And note the repetition of the expression "the Lamb," here, and throughout the book. As it is Christ who is the only Saviour, so it is Christ crucified, Christ slain. How can any sing the eternal song whose faith is not faith in His Blood? "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

In ver. 11 notice again the order in which they stood, the angels round about the throne, and the elders and living creatures; the redeemed by the precious blood of Christ are nearer and higher than the angels. In ver. 12 the sevenfold ascription, "Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, and might,"

is a doxology of completeness, itself indicating the time of the end.

In ver. 13 the elder seems to have answered St. John's thought. Clearly, the multitude are not identified with the elders. The reply is an expression of profound reverence—"Sir," My Lord, "thou knowest." "Thou knowest" reminds us of the promise of fulness of knowledge in That Day. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Notice the reason why these are saved, ver. 14. "They washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne. Nothing is more painful than to have to disabuse some poor sufferer's mind of the notion that because of his sufferings here, he shall never suffer hereafter. It makes one shudder to hear foolish persons describe as a "happy release" the death of such an one, who has died without any evidence whatever of repentance and faith in Christ. A happy release! what, if his portion be that of Dives in hell? what, if he has opened his eyes in that place of torment? A happy release! Oh, think of the cruel mockery such words would be to one who had just found out the reality of the words of the Lord of love Himself about the worm that never dieth, and the fire that shall never be quenched. "Blessed are the dead which die *in the Lord*," remember, and none besides. A whole lifetime of suffering will go for nothing, however patiently endured, if there be no saving interest through faith, in those sufferings of the Great Sufferer by which alone there is atonement for sin. These are not saved because of their *sufferings*, but because they had washed their robes in the precious Blood. We read

in chapter xvi. 15, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." These had not kept their garments, and at the Master's coming they were not fit to meet Him, but during that tribulation they had washed their robes, not in the blood of the tribulation, but the blood of the Atonement. The lesson for us here is that tribulation should bring us to the Lamb. The grand instrument God uses to sanctify, as well as justify the soul, is the Atonement—the Blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanses from all sin; not only from *guilt*, but *sin*. Compare John xiii. 8, 1 John i. 7. Never be afraid that the Atonement if fully and freely proclaimed, may give rise in the mind of the sinner to the thought that he may continue in sin with impunity. "No man was ever made to sin by believing that Christ was made sin for him."

Ver. 15–17.—They are not of the company of the elders. They do not sing the new song of chap. v. Nothing is *yet* said of their being made kings and priests, nor of crowns, nor of thrones for them. But they are inexpressibly blessed. They, too, are before the Throne. They see Him as He is. They have an eternal service, and He that sitteth upon the Throne shall *tabernacle* over them, the over-shadowing of God's own Presence shall be theirs. Compare Is. iv. 5, 6, Ezek. xxxvii. 27, also 2 Cor. xii. 9, "That the power of Christ may tabernacle upon me." They shall never more know what suffering means. God's own hand shall wipe their tears away for ever; and the Lamb Himself shall tend them as a shepherd tends his flock.

It is remarkable that the blessedness of the Eternal State and of the New Jerusalem is de-

scribed in almost the same language as is here used. Compare chap. xxi. 3, 4. Some suppose that the language used in this 7th chapter is by anticipation of the future final state. But it rather seems to be descriptive of the intermediate state of these blessed dead, until they "live," in the sense of chap. xx. 4. Their past history—one of suffering and tribulation—accounts for the negative particulars in which their blessedness now, is described.

THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.

Chapter VIII.

IT is an oft-repeated lesson of the Revelation that, however things may seem to happen by chance, and troubles to come by some blind law, yet the hand of God is arranging all. We only see the result, but He is there behind the clouds, and nothing happens but by His will. All the trumpets were sounded, all the seals were opened, and all the vials were poured out *in heaven*. It is easy to assent to this ; but when we are in the midst of troubles, our faith may almost fail, and we be ready to ask, "Does God care, or see?" Hence one great practical value of this Prophecy ; it shows us God behind all, working out the definite purposes of His gracious love.

After the twofold episode in the previous chapter, the Seer now returns to the main narrative. The visions of the trumpets represent another series of judgment actions, in another part of the field, but leading up to the same great event as the series of the seals, the Lord's Second Advent.

The seals have set forth God's judgments on Christendom. The trumpets are not a repetition, nor are they the seventh seal. They are a new series of judgments upon other people ; seven in number, indicating perfectness within

themselves, and that they do not belong to the last series.

It is, perhaps, to intimate this, that we are told that after the opening of the seventh seal, and when we naturally should have expected the Advent itself, "there was silence in Heaven for about the space of half an hour." All is quiet, all praise even is hushed, as if to draw attention to the fact that more remains to be told, and that a new series is about to commence. Or the "silence" may mean a reticence which the Lord sees fit to observe concerning the things which bring in the Advent immediately; that there is something which He means to keep to Himself until the very event.

It has, however, been very beautifully suggested that the half hour's silence in heaven is to be regarded as an earnest of the Millennial rest which remaineth for the people of God. Compare 2 Thess. i. 7, and especially Rev. xiv. 13, where the blessed dead who rest seem to be in particular, the martyrs of the great tribulation and who, dying after, 1 Thess. iv. 16-17, would need such special assurance. The first idea of heaven to such, and to all in proportion to their share of earth's troubles and strifes and worries and conflicts, would be that of silent rest on the bosom of Christ. "So He giveth His beloved sleep."

Verse 2.—We are not told who *the seven angels* are "which stand before God." They may be seven distinguished from amongst the countless thousands which surround the throne. See Luke i. 19. There is a remarkable passage in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit: "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels which present the

prayers of the saints, and go in and out before the glory of the Holy One."

Verse 3.—"Another angel," and, therefore, not Christ. Observe the Jewish symbols. The scene described in Luke i. 8-11, closely resembles this.

Does ever any personal angel in any way, incense and offer the prayers of the saints? Or are we to understand the vision impersonally, and that it no more than indicates that our imperfect and sin-polluted prayers need some "incense?"

Certainly, there was a personal angel in the vision. Certainly also, the ministry of angels is a real thing. We know but little about it. But are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation? Heb. i. 14. The 91st Psalm belongs to us with its promise, "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee." *Jacob's ladder still stands.* See 2 Kings vi. 17; Matt. xviii. 10; Luke xvi. 22; 1 Cor. xi. 10.

May not that ministry extend to heaven, and may not the action here described be a part of it? There was given unto him much incense that he should *add it to the* prayers of all saints. (See margin.) The angel, observe, did not make the incense, it was given to him; and, doubtless, it represents the merits of the Lord Jesus, through whom alone our prayers find acceptance. There is but one Mediator between God and man. But the vision is as if there were some heavenly service in the matter of the prayers of the saints, for which the angels are commissioned. The vision is a vision, but of a reality.

Yet not a word can be found here or elsewhere

to justify the invocation of angels. Whatever may be intended by the angel's action it is of a minister, a servant, not of a mediator. The whole revelation of the Scriptures concerning the angels and their ministry denies and should have entirely prevented, the Christ-dishonouring error of angelic mediation.

The third, fourth, and fifth verses are connected. In ver. 3 we have prayer offered ; in ver. 4, prayer accepted ; and in ver. 5, prayer answered. All through the ages have the saints prayed, "Thy kingdom come." The result is now at hand. And once more, before this new series of judgments, God shows us prayer as the connecting link between the Divine will and the execution of that will. See Ezekiel xxxvi. vers. 26 and 37. The answer here is by the fire of judgment : compare Ezekiel x. 2 ; Psalm xviii. 4-19. We may be sure always of an answer to true prayer, but we know not by what door or in what shape the answer will come. There must often be worse confusion before God brings in harmony, and a clearing storm before the fair weather.

And now, upon whom do these trumpet judgments fall ? Some interpreters assure us that the visions are but further indications of the principles upon which God's government will proceed, and of the general character of the events by which the final destruction of all that is evil will be achieved. (1) The humbling of human pride, 1 Peter i. 24 ; Isaiah ii. 12, 13. (2) The overthrow of forms of evil which have attained gigantic proportions, and the consequent development of new evils, Jer. li. 25. (3) The appearance of false teachers poisoning the minds of men by subtle influ-

ences, 1 Cor. xi. 19. (4) The times of heavy sorrow, seasons of darkness through which the Church advances, when the lights of human wisdom and of spiritual guidance are obscured. (5) The spirit of enmity against Christ and His truth; now concentrated in some individual, now more actively manifested by the multitude, in a more open hostility, and a more malicious energy; and yet unable to do any real hurt to Christ's true people, even while introducing a general misery so intense that many will think death better than life, to escape the tyrannous oppression that is born of Satanic falsehood and hatred of truth. (6) Out-breaks of violence unrestrained by law or government or public opinion, inducing wide-spread slaughter and devastation, the justly deserved and naturally engendered punishment upon men for their sins; and yet God's appeal to men to turn from their sins whose bitter fruit they are tasting.

God in such things has so visited, and will yet visit the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; to warn them of the coming destruction of sin and the impenitent sinner, and to call them to timely repentance—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Every such judgment is an assurance of the final victory of Christ over all His enemies, and of their everlasting destruction before Him. And it is not to be denied that there is a general intimation of all this in the language of these trumpet visions; more especially, perhaps, as Historical interpreters say, of the invasions upon Roman Christendom, beginning with the ravages of the Goths in the fifth century. But

we look for some yet more definite and particular fulfilment. The language has never yet been exhausted. There is yet to be a more literal accomplishment of these things than has ever yet been seen or will be seen, until the end cometh.

May not the trumpet visions find their last fulfilment in God's future dealings with the Jewish nation? We have already seen that they are to play a prominent part in the latter days, and that it will indeed be through much tribulation that they shall be brought to recognize and to own the Messiah. The central scene of these judgments may well be Palestine. The 24th chapter of St. Matthew is not only a general prophecy of the end of the world, it is spoken in particular, of the Jews, and of Jerusalem, and has yet to receive its fulfilment in future calamities to the Jewish people, and a future siege of their city. See Zechariah xiv. These trumpet visions seem related to that fulfilment.

The trumpets themselves are peculiarly Jewish. Exodus xix. 19; Numbers x. 4-8; xxix. 1; Joshua vi.

The 144,000 who are sealed for preservation during these very trumpet judgments, are taken from the twelve tribes of Israel—chapter vii.

In the episode which follows the 6th trumpet, and is evidently closely connected with the trumpets, "the holy city," and "the temple," can hardly be other than Jerusalem and its temple.

The area of the scene is much more confined than in the judgment of the seals; that may extend all over the whole Christian world, but this is over "the third part." Compare Ezekiel v. 2 and 12, where God pronounces similar

judgments upon the third part of the children of Jerusalem.

In each of the trumpet judgments with the exception of the fourth, there is the prominent presence of fire ; and the fourth affects the sun. Compare Ezekiel xxii. 18-23 ; Malachi iv. 1.

These are indications that God is dealing in these judgments, if not with the Jews only, yet, with the Jews and Palestine in particular. And they are confirmed by the details of the visions.

The first four trumpets bring judgments on natural objects, the earth, the trees, the sea, &c., and it is not to be said that these signify men, for the other trumpets are expressly said to be judgments on men and not on natural things, ch. ix. 4, 15. The effects are first in the destruction and vitiation of the necessities and refreshments of life. It is not possible to interpret with any confidence many of the details. They remind us forcibly of the plagues of Egypt, and much of Zechariah xiii., xiv., seem to find in them its fulfilment.

First Trumpet.—Hail, fire, and blood upon the earth ; the third part of the trees and all green grass consumed. Compare Ex. ix. 23-25 ; Joel ii. 30.

Second Trumpet.—The third part of the sea becomes blood, &c. See Exodus vii. 20, 21, and for the burning mountain, Jeremiah li. 25. The judgments thus inflicted are precisely those which were withheld until the Israelites were sealed, ch. vii. ver. 3.

Third Trumpet.—Vitiation of the rivers, &c., by the star called Wormwood. Compare Jeremiah ix. 15 ; xxiii. 15. Israel had been warned against idolatry as “a root that beareth gall and wormwood.”—Deut. xxix. 18.

Fourth Trumpet.—The third part of the sun, &c., darkened.—Exodus x. 21, &c. The light shall not be clear nor dark, “It is a day, not day nor night,” Zechariah xiv. 6, 7, referring to this very period.

After this St. John beheld an angel flying in the midst of heaven, crying, “Woe, woe, because of the remaining trumpets”—ver. 13. The best MSS. have the word “eagle” instead of “angel.” Deut. xxviii. 49. The figure is one of some emphatic warnings, which at the time will be given, of still greater woes upon the still impenitent. “Great plagues remain for the ungodly.”

Let the vision cry aloud to any who are in trouble and sorrow which conscience connects with wrong-doing. “Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.” God speaks when He strikes,—“Oh! do not that abominable thing that I hate.” There is a striking conditional promise in the Book of Proverbs, “Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you.” What is that reproof of God? It is conscience speaking to the sinner, sometimes through the accidents and occasions of life, sometimes by itself; speaking of his sin, telling him that it is sin, urging him to turn from it. He can “turn,” in the sense intended—he can avoid the scene of temptation, he can resolve and make the practical endeavour to give up the wrong. Let him do so, and the promise is his, “I will pour out my Spirit unto you.” Let him refuse, and the inference is that God will let him alone. In the attitude of prayerful, trustful obedience God will meet him with the necessary grace; in the attitude of wilful disobedience he has no promise whatever, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS.

Chapter IX.

WE may not venture to speak with anything like assurance about the details of these visions. Some of them, perhaps, should be considered as only parts of "the requisite symbolic machinery of the prophecy," and not in themselves strictly prophetic of corresponding historic incidents. Such difficulties should not drive us from the subject, but we must beware of attempting to force an interpretation so as to make the passage fit in with any theory.

Historical interpreters see in this 9th chapter the desolation of Roman Christendom by the Mahomedan Saracens (5th Trumpet); and the subsequent invasion by the Turks (6th Trumpet).

Verses 1-12.—The star was Mahomet, whose sign was a key, as the cross is that of Christians. The false religion of Mahomedanism darkened all the earth. In enormous hordes of cavalry as swarming locusts, "like unto horses prepared unto battle," the Arabs invaded Christendom, and inflicted on its apostate people the most fearful judgments, tormenting with cruellest oppression the Christians whom they spared.

They had a king over them—the spirit of their first head as embodied in the Koran. The Saracen woe lasted from about A.D. 612 to A.D. 960.

Verses 13–20.—The crossing of the Euphrates in A.D. 1063, by immense masses of Turkish cavalry, their subsequent victories and desolations, and the capture of Constantinople, in A.D. 1453. Ver. 18 is supposed to allude to the employment of artillery for the first time, and to which the fall of the city was mainly due.

We again accept this as a fulfilment of the prophecy. But, fearful as were the Saracen and the Turkish woe, the visions seem to point to horrors still more terrible. We look for a further and a final accomplishment in the last hours of "*Jacob's trouble*."

The fifth Trumpet, ver. 1.—The fall of the star is a symbol of the apostasy and subsequent destruction of some power, Isaiah xiv. 12. The gift of the key of the pit indicates the bringing in, by God's permission, in some peculiar way, of diabolical influence. To some individual, symbolized by the fallen star, it will be given, for the purpose of the part which he is to play, to be the means of a new effort by the devil and his angels. Is not this an anticipation of the beast of ch. xiii. 1, 2? See verse 11.

Verse 3.—"There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." What does the smoke signify? Probably, a spirit of lying delusion and enmity to God, by which Satan will be allowed to prepare the way for the invader. As for the locusts, of much of the description of them no satisfactory interpretation has ever been given. We may, however, take the figure

to be significant of a vast invading host. The prophet Joel uses the locust scourge as a type of the devastating Assyrian invasion. Joel ii. 4, &c. The power given unto them "as the scorpions have power," may mean deadly malice: "their crowns of gold," as it were, point perhaps to a confederation of kingdoms, ch. xvii. 12, 13; their "faces like men" signify intelligence; their "hair as the hair of women," allurements; "their teeth as the teeth of lions," strength and ferocity; and their breastplates, "as it were breastplates of iron," invincible resistance.

Verse 4.—Compare Luke x. 19 and notice how the promise comes immediately after that the Lord had said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven;" as here, St. John saw a star fall from heaven. The command "to hurt" points to the unsealed Israelites, ch. vii. Ex. xii. 23.

Verse 6.—"For the first time the Apostle ceases to be the exponent of what he saw, and becomes the direct organ of the Spirit."

Verse 11.—Unlike the literal locusts (Prov. xxx. 27) they had a king over them called Abaddon, or Apollyon, the Destroyer. Who is this fearful being? If not identical with the star of ver. 1, he is apparently a further development of the same character, in some yet more Satanic person. May it not be the last great Antichrist, who now for the first time appears on the scene? He is emphatically "the angel of the abyss," the messenger of Satan, as none has ever yet been. His Hebrew name, Abaddon, signifies perdition, and St. Paul calls the Man of sin in his ultimate development, the Son of perdition. He may well be called the Destroyer. He is *the* destroyer, Jer. iv. 7,

with a world-wide dominion, insisting, as we are presently to see, upon the most abject submission on pain of death, Rev. xiii. 7. See also Isaiah xiv. 6, 12, 13; 2 Thess. ii.; Dan. viii. 23-25. His appearance here strengthens the interpretation of these trumpet visions, that they are visions of judgments upon the Jewish people. As we have already noticed (ch. vii.), prophecy indicates that there will be close relations between the Antichrist and the Jews. Under his protection, and in league with him, they will be restored to their own land; but there, ultimately, they will be the victims of his extreme vengeance. See in particular Isaiah xxviii. 15, which seems to refer to some future covenant which Israel will make with some great world-power which will end in fearful judgment. So again Dan. ix. 24-27 is thought to be unfulfilled in respect of the last week, and to point to a league between the Jews and a future Prince, who in the midst of the week, will break his covenant and turn upon them with fury. Dan. xi. seems to speak of the same person, and the same thing, verses 21, 23.

Sixth Trumpet, verse 13.—The altar is the same as in chs. vi. 9 and viii. 3, on which prayers *had been offered*; and the voice seems to be in answer to those prayers. The four angels may be understood as personifications of the agencies by which God is about to bring in the judgments. There is no reason why “the great river Euphrates,” whence the invasion is to come, may not be the actual river. Scripture sometimes intermingles the literal with the allegorical. See Psalm lxxx. 8, 11.

What the full meaning of the visions which follow will be none can tell. Some faint idea

of it only may be gathered from such scenes as that of the Turkish invasion. It is a picture of a consummation of horrors, reckless war, irresistible human force, malignant ferocity, unrestrained violence and slaughter, recalling the Lord's words, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."

In ver. 15 notice the expression, "The four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." It is rather "made ready for THE hour and day," &c., i.e., the definitely appointed time. We do not know what this is, but we may know that the very hour of every trouble, as well as the trouble itself, is appointed by God. Sometimes we say, "not this cross," and sometimes, "not now." But the believer should say, "My Father times as well as chooses my cross."

Verse 20.—The tribulation, fearful as it is, does not result in repentance. The survivors "repented not of the works of their hands"—literally, they *repented not out of* the works, &c. We may repent *in* a thing, but that is not sufficient; we must repent *out of* it. Real repentance is not merely being sorry for the pains and penalties of some wrong we have done, but putting the evil away from us, and determining, by God's help, to overcome it.

The sins specified in ver. 20 are no doubt sins of covetousness and worldliness which is idolatry, but they are, chiefly, sins of literal idolatry, identical with those which Israel of old committed. See Deut. iv. 28; Psalm cxi. 34-40; Acts vii. 41. The evil spirit of idolatry that has been cast out from the Jewish nation will return with sevenfold power, according to Christ's prophetic warning, "Another shall

come in his own name, and him they will receive ;"—one of whom we shall hear more presently, and in whose service idolatry will reach its climax.

Let us not miss the practical lesson for ourselves to be read here. There is a hardening process which goes on in the heart of the man who is going on still in his wickedness, till the hardness becomes desperate and the man past feeling. I have heard of the deathbed of such an one, who seemed to be actually amid the pains of hell, whilst his body was still upon earth. As the large drops of perspiration stood upon his agonized forehead he exclaimed, "There is nothing you can tell me. I know it all. I am entering hell with my eyes wide open." The man knew the Gospel well, he had heard it for years from its ablest preachers, but he had steeled his heart against it, and at the last he could feel nothing. Oh, how earnestly should we pray, "From hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word and Commandment, good Lord deliver us."

THE EPISODE OF THE LITTLE BOOK.

Chapter X.

THE historical interpretation of this chapter is one of the strongest points in the Historical system. The vision here is supposed to represent the Reformation. In the closing verses of chapter ix. we read that notwithstanding the fearful judgments inflicted upon mankind, "the rest of the men repented not" of their sins and iniquities. Their state had become a very advanced state of moral corruption. Even such was the condition of all Christendom previous to the Reformation. The darkness might have been felt ; the apostacy was fearful ; clergy and people were steeped in wickedness, ignorance, immoralities, and idolatries. All seemed ripe for judgment. God in mercy sent the Reformation.

Ver. I.—"And I saw another mighty angel came down from heaven." Who is this angel ? Certainly the characteristics are those of Jesus Christ Himself. The angel is described as having a rainbow, or, as it ought to be translated, "*the* rainbow," the token of covenant mercy, upon his head, and "his face was as it were the face of the sun, and his feet as pillars

of fire." But surely the word "another" shows us that it was not Jesus Christ, but one of His angels, one who came in some special power and authority of Christ. (Wedowell to remember that all this is a *vision*. St. John, as in a dream, sees and hear these things.) Now, the Reformation was the work of God in a very special manner. We know that every good gift is from above and cometh down from Him, but from beginning to end of that wonderful event, the finger of God, especially in the conversion of Luther, is unusually evident. This angel is described as having a "face as it were the sun." We are reminded of those beautiful words (Malachi iv. 2), "Unto you that fear my name shall the *Sun of Righteousness* arise, with healing in his wings." And we remember that the watchword of Reformation was "Jehovah-tsidkenu" (the Lord our *righteousness*). The great doctrine then brought to light was that Man is justified by the righteousness of Christ, and by that alone; a doctrine utterly opposed by the dogmas of the Church of Rome, but God's own word of light and life to the dark and guilty soul.

Ver. 3 is regarded as a prophecy of the sentence of excommunication, and the anathemas which were pronounced against Luther by the Pope; the "seven thunders which uttered their voices" are referred to the seven hilled city of Rome whence the anathemas were thundered forth.

Ver. 4.—The Seer says, "And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and *write them not*." This is supposed to indicate Luther's earlier

feelings towards the Pope and the Church of Rome, and how his feelings were changed. For a while, even when the Gospel truth was quite plain to him, he thought that the Church of Rome was the true Church, and maintained an attitude of great reverence towards the Pope, as the representative of Christ. So, when the anathemas of the Vatican were uttered against him, he was about to "write the thunders," to acknowledge them, and submit to their authority. But God said, "Seal them up; write them not. They are the mere anathemas of man; pay no regard to them." The conviction of this grew stronger and stronger within the Reformer, until he burnt the Papal bull, proclaiming it an imposture.

Ver. 6.—The better translation is "that time should no longer be." Historical interpreters understand this to mean that time should no longer be extended to the permitted reign of evil, especially the power of Papal Rome; and they interpret the angel's oath by reference to an impression upon the mind of Luther and his followers, that the millennium was near at hand. That such an impression did exist is very evident; but it is hard to believe that it can *thus* have been predicted.

Ver. 8.—According to the same interpreters, "the little book" is the Bible, the *open* Bible; the little book was *open* in the hand of the angel. The Church of Rome denied the Bible to the people. It was, perhaps, the very head and front of her offending that she withheld God's word, forbidding men to read or even to possess a Bible that they could understand. The people knew about that book only what the priest chose to teach them. The great

success of the Reformation was in the *open Bible*. Luther proclaimed it to be the only rule for ministers and people.

It is difficult to understand the meaning of the words in the 9th verse : "Take it" (the little book), "and eat it up ; it shall make thy belly bitter ; but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." Perhaps they are significant of the sweetness and the bitterness which Luther experienced when studying God's word. It was a new book to him when he discovered it in the library of Erfurt. He was deeply interested ; it was "sweet" to him. But as with increased attention he read on, he found that he was a sinner, and that God was just ; then he tasted the *bitterness*. He saw what he was in God's sight, and it caused him intense spiritual anguish. He trembled as he read, for his soul's salvation seemed to be impossible. "What can I do," he asked himself—"what must I do to be saved?" At length he told his troubles to the Vicar-General of the convent. In him he found a true helper. Luther had seen his sin as *real sin* ; "My sin, my sin," he cried, "how can I expect to have an interest in the love of God?" Staupitz replied, "Would you only be the semblance of a sinner? Then you must expect only the semblance of a Saviour : but if you be, as you say you are, a real sinner, then there is for you a real Saviour." The "*bitterness*" soon left Luther's spirit, and he was heard to exclaim, "O, happy sin that has merited such a Redeemer."

This is the Historical view of this chapter ; but, after all, it is not sufficient. The agreement at certain points between the prophecy

and the early history of the Reformation is certainly remarkable, and there is, perhaps, enough to show that a true fulfilment is found in the events of that great movement. But the full accomplishment is yet to come.

The 9th and 10th chapters are digressions from the main narrative, interrupting and at the same time assisting it ; they are a two-fold episode between the 6th and 7th trumpet, as there was the twofold episode of the sealing of the 144,000, and of the great palm-bearing multitude between the 6th and the 7th seal.

It seems in the 10th chapter as if the Seer were telling us about himself. There is a pause, and it is as if God were pausing to mend the pen with which He is writing. St. John has become depressed in spirit ; he has seen many visions leading up to Christ's coming, and yet that event is delayed ; and he has seen that the fearful judgments sent upon the people, have failed to bring them to repentance. All this has saddened and depressed him. God therefore gives him some special assurance, something to raise him up again. But the vision is not only for himself. The Seer is here a type of those who will be on the earth during the great tribulation, but *on the Lord's side*, and who, we may well imagine, will be perplexed, depressed, and cast down by what they see going on around them ; and to whom Christ may give some special assurance, some intimation, it may be, of His coming. It is vain to speculate as to what these "seven thunders" said. The apostle knew what they meant ; but he was not to write it down. This reminds us of the incident in John xii. 27-30. Christ had been speaking to His Father in the

trouble of His soul, and there came a voice from heaven; and the people who stood by and heard it, said that it thundered. They only heard what they thought was thunder, but Jesus knew the voice of Him who spoke; and it was a voice of *encouragement*.

We have before noticed that the words "there should be time no longer," mean "that there should be *delay* no longer." Six angels have already sounded their trumpets; and this angel gives assurance to St. John personally, and to St. John as representing God's faithful ones in that fearful time, that when the seventh angel should begin to sound the mystery of God should be finished. The mystery of God is God's plan of Providential government through this dispensation, on to the Lord's Second Advent. We understand but little of it now; "God moves in a mysterious way."

The angels' oath, then, is not that time should soon cease and eternity begin, but that the close of the dispensation was at hand, it should not now long be delayed; there is but one more trumpet yet to sound, and then cometh the end of all sorrow and suffering, with the coming of the King. At the end of this 7th verse the words "He hath declared to His servants the prophets" may be rendered, "He hath *evangelized*;" it is a declaration of glad and good tidings, that the Lord is at hand.

Verse 9. "The little book" is, as we have seen in the Historical system, the Bible, opened at the time of the Reformation; but what is it in connection with the *ultimate* fulfilment of the prophecy? Certainly it is not the book mentioned in chapter v. That was large, this is little. The former was sealed,

while the latter is open. Moreover, the little book is evidently something by itself, and not part of a large roll, and it is intended for the especial individual help of the Seer. May it not well be the book of the remainder of the prophecies to be fulfilled before the Advent, and so, a further intimation to the Seer that there would be but a little more for him to see and record? So, too, an intimation to the suffering saint of God, typified by the Seer, that there would be but a little more to be endured before the consummation?

For the figure of "eating the book" compare Ezekiel iii. 1-3; Jer. xv. 16. The interpretation is the reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting the meaning of the book—Psalm xl. 8; James i. 21. He who would speak good words to others should have those words hidden within his own heart, so incorporated in his moral being, that to obey them becomes his instinct as a new creature in Christ.

Then, there is that strange announcement, "It shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." The meaning seems to be that the privilege about to be vouchsafed to him would make him very happy at first; the revelation of God's will would bring "sweetness" at the beginning. But the after effects of it would make him sorrowful; when he began to *digest* the subject-matter, he would find much that would produce "bitterness." God gives him encouragement, but He does not conceal from him that he will have to prophesy things that will distress him very much. In ver. 11 there is an unfortunate translation; the word "before" should be "concerning." St. John will have to prophesy again "concerning" many

people, and nations, and tongues, and kings ; concerning their sins, and the judgments which must follow. Compare St. Paul : " Many walk, of whom I tell you *even weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction," &c., Philip. iii. 18. The experience is repeated in the Church, especially with young Christians. When we first come to the knowledge of the grace of God, it is as honey to us for " sweetness ; " but often, afterwards there comes a feeling of " bitterness," as we realize more and more the sinfulness of sin ; " I abhor myself." Yet, we should ask ourselves, if there is anything blameworthy to cause the bitterness, any sin that we are wilfully retaining. A fault permitted in a servant would not be allowed in the child. We may take the 6th of Isaiah as illustrating this " sweet " and " bitter." In the first four verses the prophet describes his vision ; there is only sweetness there ; but in the fifth verse he cries, " Woe is me, for I am undone ;" here is the " bitter " sense of sin, after seeing the King, the Lord of Hosts. Again, the vision is for us in our work. When we first begin to deliver the message, the work is very sweet to us ; we love the message ourselves, and we long that others shall love it too. But as we go on and find that on every side the message is rejected, and as we reflect upon the wrath which they are heaping to themselves, and the portion which they are preparing for themselves who slight God's mercy, refuse His Christ, and resist His Spirit, then, the sweetness gives way to a bitterness. Yes, we have often to sow in tears because of men's hardness of heart, the opposition and contradiction of sinners, their carelessness and indifference ; again and again our labour will

seem to be in vain. But it never is in vain in the Lord. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." I remember reading a striking illustration. A pious father was long distressed by the ungodly conduct of his two sons. As a last resource, he used to make it a constant subject of his prayers, that he might die so triumphantly, that his sons might see the value of vital piety. But, when he was dying, he was so full of anxiety and doubt, as almost to despair of his own salvation. His prayers, however, were answered. The sons, when they saw their father's end, said within themselves, "If our father, who was so decided in his piety, found it so hard a thing to die, what will become of us, who make no profession of piety at all?" And that train of thought, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, led to their conversion. We must leave God to carry out in His own way, and in His own season, His gracious purposes. "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage; wait, I say, on the Lord."

Moreover, the least success in our work is more than the greatest in any other. If we bring one soul to Christ we are the instruments of that work which, so far as we know, is the only work done upon earth which causes joy in the presence of the angels in heaven: we gladden the heart of God.

EPISODE—THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE.

Chapter XI. 1-3.

VERSES 1, 2.—St. John receives a command to measure the temple of God, with its altar and worshippers, but not the outer court which is given to the Gentiles. Compare Ezek. xl.

The word which is here translated temple does not signify the whole building, but only the innermost shrine of the sacred enclosure, its holy of holies. The measuring is no doubt, the taking account of this “temple,” for protection and preservation. Accordingly, some interpreters understand the vision to mean a marking off for preservation, of the Church within the Church, the true Israelites, the company of real Christians, as distinct from the great body of mere nominal professors of Christianity. In the Historical system, this took place in the true doctrine by Luther and other Reformers, defining the true Church of Christ—the temple of God: excluding the whole scheme of Popery, and the great mass of professing Christians living in the practical heathenism of the Church of Rome, “the outer court given to the Gentiles.” In the same system, the measuring of the altar signifies

the definition by the Reformers of the true nature of the Atonement, and of a sinner's justification before God; the "measuring of the worshippers" is their statements concerning true membership with the true church; and the forty-two months for the treading down of the holy city, represent the twelve hundred and sixty years of Papal supremacy, during which Christendom was trodden down, and Christianity corrupted.

We look for a more exact and literal fulfilment yet to come.

It should be observed that the visions here are to some extent by anticipation. The words in verse 7 about "the beast," of whom we have not yet heard, are unintelligible until we read the account of him in chapter xiii.; and they perhaps, imply that the period both of the measuring and of the witnessing, is the period of the dominion of the beast, in the power which he has received from the dragon.

The chapter is a most difficult one to interpret. It seems that the most literal interpretation is the best. It is throughout peculiarly Jewish, and, like all the visions of the trumpets, it apparently refers to the Jewish people in particular, as they will be in these last days of fiery judgment. Thus understood, the visions come in quite consistently both with those which precede and those which follow; and are helpful to our understanding of them all.

Is the "temple of God," then, literally the temple in Jerusalem rebuilt by the restored Jews? The difficulty against this is that while the measuring indicates *protection* against "the Gentiles," the prophecy of Daniel which the Lord quotes in Matt. xxiv. 15, seems to await

its full meaning in some pollution of the holy of holies by the last Antichrist (see Dan. ix. 27).

It seems more probable that the measured temple, with its furniture and worshippers (the particulars indicating God's carefulness), is symbolical of an elect Jewish remnant, whom God will protect and reserve for Himself, true and faithful to Him; and that the unmeasured outer court is symbolical of the great mass of the nation, impenitent and unbelieving, lately the willing subjects of the Antichrist, and now to be the objects of his vengeance for the "forty and two months." Compare Luke xxi. 24.

We have already seen in chapter vii. the sealing of a measured number of all the twelve tribes; now, there is a special intimation of the protection and preservation of a faithful few in Judea and Jerusalem, the scenes of the forthcoming visions. Probably, the measurement is of a certain number of the restored Jews, as distinct from the *ten* tribes of Israel, not restored in a body until after the Advent. Prophecy seems to indicate that the ten tribes (who did not return from their captivity before Christ's first Advent, and who, therefore, are not chargeable with the guilt of putting Him to death), will indeed, undergo a full share of the troubles of those latter days, but will not be involved in those exceptional troubles in which the Antichrist is the prime instrument and of which Judea is the scene. The Lord's own hand shall bring them in after His return. See for example Isaiah xi. 11; xiv. 1; lxvi. 10-21.

Let us not fail to lay to heart the spiritual lesson which, independently of its prophetic import, the measuring of the temple teaches. We have noticed that the temple to be "mea-

sured " is the innermost shrine, as distinct from the larger enclosure. So there is (as there always has been) an *outward* and visible Church and an *inner* and spiritual Church—a Church within a Church ; in spite of all imperfections, the *true* Church of Christ, to which alone " never perishing " is promised ; the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against *it*. In ver. 2 we read of the outer court being given unto the Gentiles, and that the holy city (Jerusalem) is to be trodden under foot. Is not the outer court of the Church of Christ now given over to the god of this world ? There has never been more worldliness, and more mere showy profession in religion, than in the present day. The great fault of our time is very like the fault of the Laodicean church. They said they were rich, and had need of nothing ; but Christ said of them, that, in His sight, they were wretched and miserable, poor, blind, and naked. We may think ourselves spiritually rich, because of the profession we make, but that is not enough ; the question for each is, What part of the temple do I belong to ? do I only tread the outer court, or do I really belong to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, however small that Church may be ? " He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. ii. 28, 29.

EPISODE—THE TWO WITNESSES.

Chapter XI. 3-13.

COMPARE the vision in Zechariah iv. for the restored exiles in their difficult and hindered work of re-building the Temple. The two witnesses there are Zerubbabel, and Joshua the high priest, who are shown the hidden place where their sufficiency lies. “Not by might nor by power, *but by My Spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts.” They have much to hinder and discourage them, yet by God’s strength, the mountain shall become a plain.

Verse 3.—“My two witnesses.” We are reminded of the testimony for Him which the Lord requires of each of His people. “Ye are my witnesses.” “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” In an age characterised by an impatience of any outspoken denunciation of sin, and by a disposition to tolerate any and every doctrine, however anti-Christian, it is not easy boldly to rebuke fashionable vice, to tell the professing Christian that the world’s follies, which he loves, are damning follies, because they alienate the heart from God ; to speak out plainly of im-

moralities which are hidden beneath the veneer of modern society ; to stand up against whatever doctrine contradicts the Gospel of Christ. But we are called to it, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

We too may have obstacles to contend with, which appear as a "mountain;" but our "mountain" shall become a "plain," if only we are faithful. It may be that we shall have to witness, as it were "in sackcloth," in token of opposing impenitence and contempt of God's word ; yet He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Compare Micah iii. 8.

In ver. 5 we read that "If any man hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies." The rejected testimony will one day turn upon those who have rejected it, the Gospel will witness against those who do not profit by it. We remember Christ's solemn warning, "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath One that judgeth him ; *the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (John xii. ver. 48). God says that His word shall not return unto Him void. Men may not accept the Gospel, but it does not fall to the ground ; it will one day testify against those who have refused it. It is a savour of life, unto life ; or of death, unto death. It has a power of salvation to every one that believeth ; but it has a power of condemnation to them that believe it not ; shutting heaven against them, and causing even earthly things to become loathsome to the sensual heart that seeks its satisfaction in them, to be as water turned to blood.

Verse 7, &c.—There is not only the world's indifference and neglect, but its deadly enmity to be encountered, more or less, by every true witness for God ; yet, every such witness has his own allotted days, for work and testimony, which neither man nor devil can shorten. God may allow the enmity of the anti-Christian spirit to proceed to extremities, and to silence altogether the voice of such testimony. Nevertheless, God has a lifting up to honour and glory in heaven, for every faithful witness ; while even on earth, there is often a recognition of their worth where once it was rejected, though it may be only in terror.

These are thoughts suggested by the strange history of the two witnesses. But who does not feel that they do not exhaust the language : that something further and closer to the vision is intended ? What, then, may that be ? What is the interpretation of the history as part of the prophecy ? The question is not easy of answer. Dean Alford writes that " no solution has ever been given of this portion of the prophecy." The difficulty is undoubtedly very great, and we must not be disappointed if we cannot arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

Historical interpreters consider the witnesses to be two lines of faithful men in Eastern and Western Christendom, who, during the dark ages, witnessed for Christ. Some remarkable correspondences are no doubt to be observed ; as, for example, the declaration of the Lateran Council in 1514, that resistance to the Papacy was at an end ; "the witnesses were dead," to the great delight of the Pope ; and the fact that within three and a half years Luther posted his

famous theses at Wittemberg ; the witnesses "stood upon their feet."

But here again, the *satisfaction* of the prophecy is yet to come. Some, with good reason, suppose the scene of the witness to be the actual Jerusalem where the Lord was crucified, and which for its wickedness at this time, is called spiritually, Sodom and Egypt. Others calling attention to the description of the city, "The Great City," think it to be the great "Babylon," which is afterwards made prominent in the prophecy. But whether in "Babylon" or in the literal Jerusalem, it seems that we cannot avoid the conclusion, that in these last terrible days God will raise up two witnesses, two men, or two companies of men who shall testify for Him against the wickedness of the times, and the Antichrist in particular. They shall literally work these miracles ; be literally put to death by the beast, to the great delight of the nations ; and be literally revived and borne up to heaven, to the consternation of the beholders. Why should this be thought an incredible thing ? Remember what God has done, and how God has from time to time provided Himself with instrumentality equal to the occasion. The *literal* fulfilment of all fulfilled prophecies has taught us to expect an equally literal fulfilment of prophecies which are of things yet future. Let us not generalize and spiritualize these visions so that, excluding the particular and literal meaning, we lay ourselves open to the suspicion that had we lived in Old Testament times, we should have refused to see any literal meaning, for example, in Isaiah liii.—a personal Messiah in whom it would be

all fulfilled to the letter. And let us think of the wonders with which God has invested His heroes of the past. The story of some of the Old Testament prophets is hardly less wonderful than that of these two witnesses ; or, to take an example from modern times, than the story of Martin Luther. What wisdom, what power, what miraculous success God gave him ! How marvellous was the protection which God extended to him ! His enemies could not touch him. Why should not God work in a similar manner in that terrible crisis ? It is the time of the great tribulation, of the reign of infidelity and the Antichrist, of the unchecked dominion of full grown sin. But God has some to be saved even then. He will save them as now, " by the foolishness of preaching," and the instrument will be fitted by Him, and handled by Him, according to the difficulties of the occasion.

There is a striking resemblance usually pointed out between the two witnesses, and Moses and Elias. Some have even thought that Moses and Elias will appear again, and in answer to the question could they suffer death in their glorified bodies ? it has been asked, "Is there not room to think that their bodies may not yet be so ?" Elijah never died. And as for Moses, we are told indeed that he died, but it is added, that *God* buried him, and that no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day. Compare the curious expression of St. Jude concerning Moses. " Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the *body of Moses*" (ver. 9). However, "the spirit and power" of Moses and Elias is reproduced in these two. We read of fire devouring their enemies ; so did Elijah bring down fire from heaven to consume

those whom Ahaziah sent to him (2 Kings i. 10). Their power to shut heaven that it rain not, reminds us of Elijah's prophecy, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years according to my word" (1 Kings xvii. 1). Further, they had "power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues;" therein repeating exactly what Moses did in Egypt. (Exodus vii. 19, &c.)

Moreover, we are reminded of the saying of Christ after the disappearance of Moses and Elias at the transfiguration, "Elias truly *shall* first come and restore all things, but I say unto you that Elias *is* come already," Matt. xvii. 11-13. In Matt. xi. 14, we are told that He had already declared of John the Baptist—"If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come;" and that He added, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear," an expression generally used by the Lord when there is a deeper meaning in His words than that which is expressed. The reference in both passages is to the prophecy of Malachi iv. 4-6: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

There can be but one understanding of the Lord's words. He says that Elijah shall indeed come according to the prophecy. The old prophet whom Elisha saw go into heaven, shall literally and personally return; that is the full completion of Malachi's prophecy. But it has had already a partial fulfilment in the coming of John in the spirit and power of Elias. Hence there is no contradiction between the Lord's word of John, "this is Elias," and John's word

of himself, when, asked, "Art thou Elias?" he said, "I am not." He was not the literal Elias, and said so. In spirit, in power, in mind and talent he was like Elias; but the true Elias is yet to come. Whether Elijah is to be one of the two witnesses we know not. But it seems that they will closely resemble Moses and Elias in their character and in their work.

In ver. 3 we are told that these witnesses shall prophecy "a thousand two hundred and three-score days;" a period of three and a half years, and the same apparently as the "forty and two months" of this chapter, ver. 2; as the "time, times, and half a time" of ch. xii. 14, and of Dan. xii. 7; and as the "half of the week" in Dan. ix. 27. Here are four different expressions, all indicating the same duration of time—1,260 days; "forty-two months"; "the half of the week"; "time, times, and half a time." Compare also the three days and a half of ver. 10.

We must use all diffidence, and be ready to allow that we may be wrong, in endeavouring to interpret these figures; but comparing the passages in which they occur, it seems (1) that the period of the dominion of the beast, *i.e.*, the Antichrist, will be a period of seven "years," "the week" of Dan. ix. 27. (2) That in the former half of this period, that is, for three and a half years, he will wage successful war and acquire universal dominion, and be in league with the restored Jews, who welcome his friendship and patronage. (3) That he will break the league, and turn in fury against the Jews and urge the most oppressive and bitter persecution against them for the remaining three and a half years. (4) That then he shall suddenly be destroyed in their land, by the

Lord's coming. The former part of the week seems to correspond with the first five seals, and the latter half with the six trumpets. Whether the forty and two months during which the witnesses will play their parts, will be identical with either half of the week or not, we cannot tell. It seems as if it would be so. But their three and a half years may be any part of the seven.

The assumption of the witnesses is followed by a great earthquake and the destruction of 7,000 men. "And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." Is there not an intimation here—just before the last trumpet, of a spirit of grace, and of supplication, and of mourning for their sins, poured upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, by which God will prepare their hearts to throw themselves at the feet of Him whom they have pierced, as He appears for their deliverance? Zech. xii. 10, &c. The giving glory to God here intended is, undoubtedly, the penitent recognition of Him in the confession of sin. See Jer. xiii. 16; Joshua vii. 19.

In the Historical system, as we have already noticed, the two witnesses are Christ's few faithful witnesses during the Apostacy of the Middle Ages. Their miracles are interpreted to mean God's judgments on the Apostate nations: their martyrdom by the beast is the persecution of true Christianity by the Church of Rome: their resurrection and ascension into heaven represents the revival of true religion and the full toleration of Protestantism in Germany: and the earthquake and fall of the tenth part of the city is the renunciation of Popery in England.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

Chapter XI. 14-19.

THE prophecy now returns to the trumpets. After the fifth trumpet it was declared that, "one woe is past—behold there come two woes more hereafter," ch. ix. 12 ; the plagues of the sixth trumpet form the second woe. Now we are reminded that the third woe cometh quickly. It is the woe of the seventh trumpet, and the angel from heaven has declared that the end should not be delayed beyond it.

There are, however, other things yet to be told of in another part of the scene of action ; another series of prophetic visions is therefore given. And just as when the sixth seal had brought us close to the end, instead of the end which we expected, two episodes were introduced, and then, upon the opening of the seventh seal, another series of visions, so here, the last woe and the end are deferred, that a third series of visions, that of the vials, may complete the prophetic survey of the field of action. It is an observation of great importance, that at the seventh seal, and the seventh trumpet, and the seventh vial, amongst other things which are peculiar to each seventh, there is a solemn yet plain indication in the

imagery, or by direct expression that the end is come or close at hand ; see chs. viii. 5 ; xi. 15-19 ; xvi. 18-20. This forms strong ground for inference that the three series of visions are not continuous, but resumptive : not indeed going over the same ground with one another, but resuming the history, each at its own distinct starting-point, and travelling each by its own line of action to the common ending in the Advent of the Lord.

The chorus of the Church at the opening of the seventh trumpet, is evidently in anticipation of the end, now all but come : it is praise for what God is now immediately about to do.

Verse 19.—This temple, itself in heaven, is *opened*, pointing perhaps to the manifestation of the Sons of God for which creation waits. Also, the ark of the covenant was seen, indicative of God's faithfulness both to His promises to His church, now to be filled up in their accomplishment ; and of His faithfulness to His threatenings against His enemies, now to be executed to the full. "The sight of the ark was, if we might so speak, the natural end of the section of the seven trumpets." It confirms the reference of the trumpet actions and consequences to the Jews. "It assures the true Israel of the protection of Him in whom is everlasting strength."

"And there were lightnings and voices and thunderings," &c. "The solemn salvos of the artillery of heaven with which each series of visions is concluded."

THE VISION OF THE WOMAN, THE MAN CHILD, AND THE DRAGON.

Chapter XII.

THIS chapter belongs to the main history. It is, however, retrogressive, and takes us back even to behind the 4th chapter. As we have passed through the judgments of the seals and the trumpets with their intervening episodes, we have had intimations of some great godless anti-Christian power, a person, seemingly, the main actor in these judgment scenes and the chief persecutor of God's people : see chs. vi. 2 ; ix. 11 ; xi. 7. He is now to be prominent upon the stage, this Apollyon, this beast from the pit, and it is upon him and his followers apparently that the vials are to be emptied. The visions of this chapter seem to tell us something of his origin ; and in particular, to disclose the secret of his tremendous and world-wide power, such as never yet man has had. We are now about to see sin come to its full growth, and the punishment which will then fall upon it ; but before this we are shown the hidden springs of evil, and the working of the evil one, even from the very earliest dawn of the day.

St. John sees a great wonder in heaven ; "a

woman clothed, with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars ; and she travailed in birth and pained to be delivered. And she brought forth a man child." First, who is this man child ? Is Jesus Christ Himself thus symbolized, as many commentators agree in thinking ? The objections to this interpretation seem insuperable. Christ was indeed "made of a woman ;" but the whole description of this woman and the subsequent details of her history exclude the interpretation that the Blessed Virgin is intended. This is allowed by those who say that the man child is Christ, and they interpret the woman to be the Church, referring to the beautiful picture of the Bride in the Song of Solomon : "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners ?" vi. 10. But how could the Lord Jesus in any sense be represented as the child of the Church, or the Church as giving birth to Him ? He is the Bridegroom of the Church, not the Son : and she is the Lamb's wife, not His mother. It is indeed the privilege of the Church to bring forth Christ in the sense of preaching Him by life and doctrine to the world, but this is certainly not the truth intended by the vision. Then, again, we are told that as soon as the child was born it was "caught up unto God and to His throne," so escaping the wrath of the dragon waiting to devour it ; but Jesus Christ certainly did not escape the malice of Satan, when He was here upon earth. It cannot possibly be said that He was "caught up unto God" so soon as He was born. For thirty-three years He walked amongst men, He suffered the full assault

of Satan, and it was through death that He destroyed the devil. Commentators who say that the man child is Christ, chiefly rely upon the statement in ver. 5, that this man child "was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." Doubtless this is true primarily of Christ. We remember the words in Psalm ii., "Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession ; Thou shalt break them with *a rod of iron* ; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." But there is a passage in the Revelation where this same language is used of Christ's people. "He that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall *rule them with a rod of iron* ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers. *Even as I received of my Father*," ch. ii. 26, 27. This is a promise which distinctly belongs to the *Church*; it is "to him that overcometh ;" it is part of the reward of that day. Read also Psalm xlix. 14 and cxlix. 5-9. There is good reason for the conclusion that the "man child" represents the now completed Church of Jesus Christ, and caught up according to the promise, "The dead in Christ shall rise first," &c., 1 Thess. iv. 17. As the woman "travailed in birth," so gradually is the Church now being formed, while the Lord adds to it such as shall be saved. Every day there are souls born into the world who, by God's grace, will be "born again," and become members of Christ. This will go on until the number is complete, and then will the Church be taken away.

And now, if the man child represents the

"Church," who is the woman? May she not be symbolical of all who will eventually be saved? The circle of the saved may be wider than that of the Church. "The righteous," of Matt. xxv. 37, are clearly distinguished from the Lord's "brethren," by his address to them, "*Ye* did it to *these* my brethren." They are also distinguished from the Christian Church, as we understand it, by their reply, "When saw we thee an hungered, &c.?" What Christian man could say this? Does he not *consciously* do for Christ all that as a Christian he does for men? He must deny that he has ever deserved the least item of such a glory by his poor imperfect service, but how could he thus speak as if he had not known that he was serving the Lord Christ?

Again, the great multitude before the throne, in ch. vii., are distinguished from the elders, the representatives of the Church, one of whom explains who the multitude are—observe the language throughout.

So, the guests who are called to the marriage of the Lamb, ch. xix. 9, seem to be distinct from the Bride. Compare Pslm. xlv. 12, 14.

And so, the nations of them which are saved, who walk in the light of the new Jerusalem, ch. xxi. 24, are surely not identical with the citizens proper of the Holy City; yet they enter it, and none can enter but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The woman then, may be representative of the blessed company of all those who in any way shall partake of the benefits and blessings of Christ's saving grace: her man child being "the Church of the first-born," the first fruits of God's creatures. Yet, see notes on ch. ii. 11, xv. 8, xx. 13.

Verses 3, 4.—The great red dragon is, in verse 7, expressly said to be Satan. The description of him points to his power and influence among the nations as “the god of this world,” more especially, as he will be allowed to exercise it in the kingdom of the beast ; compare ch. xvii. 3. The figure of the casting down of the stars is found in Dan. viii. 10. It expresses the fury of Satan, and his great success amongst principalities and powers in high places.

Verse 4.—The dragon stood ready “to devour the man child.” The figure very graphically describes the ceaseless deadly malice of Satan towards the Church. From the very beginning the Church has ever been the object of his fierce and bitter hatred ; he hates it still, is ever on the watch to injure and if possible destroy every member of it, and he will hate it more and more unto the end.

Verse 5.—The man child is born, and instantly is caught up, out of the reach of the dragon’s power, “to God and his throne.” Again, it may well be asked, how can this be applied to Christ ?

Verse 6.—The woman fled into the wilderness. The verse anticipates verses 13, &c., where the flight is explained, that it was to escape from persecution. Notice the expression, “Where she had a place prepared for her of God that they should feed her there.” The place is in the wilderness, but it is a place which God Himself has prepared, and she finds His own appointed sustenance there. We cannot but think of God’s providential dealings with His people now, as we read these words Troubles, sorrows, temptations may drive us into a wilderness as it were, but they cannot

drive us from God. And God has His peculiar consolation for the wilderness. He giveth meat to eat there which the world knows not of, and which even Christians know not of until they be come there. Compare Hosea ii. ver. 14. Also, if God brings us into "a wilderness," into outward circumstances of want and loneliness, we may be sure that it is to defeat some device against us of the Evil one : to keep us from the face of the serpent.

That which follows is very mysterious. We are told (verses 7-10) of "war in heaven," and the overthrow and expulsion from heaven of the devil and his angels by Michael (Jude 9) and his angels. We must be careful not to disconnect this from its context. It is a little episode by which the history of the woman is interrupted, and obviously, we are to understand that the expulsion of Satan is closely connected with the rapture of the man child. It is not the *first* expulsion of Satan before the world was, but one which takes place at this particular time, and it may be the same as that *prophetic* vision which Christ had, when He told the disciples, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke x. 18).

It seems that now Satan has access even into the presence of God, as the accuser of Christian people. In the 10th verse we read, "For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which *accused them before God, day and night.*" We remember how Satan is described as coming into the presence of God, and talking with Him about His servant Job (Job ii.). See also Zechariah iii. 1, and 1 Kings xxii. It may be said that these are visions, and Old Testament visions. But some reality is set forth by them ;

and there is nothing to warrant the thought that it is no longer possible for Satan so to approach God. On the contrary, St. Paul tells us that we wrestle against spiritual wickedness in *heavenly* places. And in the place before us the original word is in the present tense, "The accuser of our brethren which *accuseth* them," expressing the continuous habit of accusing, even up to the very hour of expulsion. Mysterious as it is, there can be little doubt that, for His own wise purposes, God allows Satan to have access to Him as an accuser of Christians. This is the meaning of 1 Peter v. ver. 8, "Your *adversary* the devil." The word means a slanderer, a calumniator, one who utters false and malicious accusations. The slanderer is the worst sort of liar, and the nearest human relation of the devil. It is the devil's business to observe the Christian's life, and misrepresenting it, continually to accuse him before God. Some find in this an explanation of Hebrews ix. ver. 23. How could "the heavenly things themselves" need purification? Perhaps because of the very permitted access of Satan as an accuser. But if we have an accuser, we have also an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who evermore stands up for us, to answer the accusation so soon as it is made; to silence the *accuser* so soon as he comes. And the accusation will shortly cease. So soon as the Church is completed and caught up, God will allow Satan access to heaven no more. For ever and altogether he will be cast out and thrown down.

Verse 11.—"They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb." The Atonement answers every-

thing, inspires with loving confidence, and is the guarantee for the power of the Holy Ghost to every believer. "And by the word of their testimony,"—by the word of God, to which they testified, living it out before the world ; carrying their self-surrender for Christ even to the length of death.

The prophecy goes on to tell us that, cast out from heaven, the dragon is filled with great wrath. Smarting under his defeat, and knowing that he has but a short time allowed him, he gathers all his strength for a last effort. His rage is directed chiefly against "the woman," and "the *remnant* of her seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (ver. 17). He is not, however, allowed to do his will. As with two eagle wings she is carried into her place in the wilderness, and nourished there from the face of the serpent for "a time, times, and half a time."

Let us now turn back to chapters vi. and vii. The former tells us in the visions of the seals, of "the tribulation, the great one"; and the latter tells us of a great multitude who come, not from, but out of, that tribulation. Probably these are identical with "the woman in the wilderness and the remnant of her seed;" "left," when the Church is caught up ; subsequently brought yet so as by fire, to repentance and salvation through the Blood of the Lamb ; but not the "man child." We are now to hear about their great persecutor. He is Satan, cast down from heaven, but as in the next chapter we are told, Satan energizing the last great Antichrist. It seems that immediately after his expulsion Satan will raise up this Antichrist, who will be the great hero of

that great tribulation, and the bitter persecutor of all who will not worship him (Revelation xiii. 2, 7, 8). From the very first, no doubt, the persecution will be attempted, as the dragon persecuted the woman so soon as he was cast down. But it seems that God will not allow it to proceed to extremities for a while. The woman is placed in a secret place of security. She has yet to bring forth many sons and daughters, "a great multitude." It is not until the fifth seal that we read of the martyrdom of those who were slain for the Word of God and their testimony. Doubtless there is persecution during the former seals, but there seems to be comparative exemption from it until the fifth seal is opened. So, here, the woman flies into the wilderness and is there preserved for a specified time.

Verse 15 probably refers to hostile popular commotions; a rising of the people, as distinct from their rulers; general infidelity, atheism and blasphemy; and all instigated by Satan against everything Christian. But "the earth helped the woman by swallowing up the flood." God can create a diversion when it pleases Him to do so; and by some providential means He will restrain "the madness of the people."

The time in the wilderness is given in verses 6 and 14. We have already seen that there are intimations that the period of the dominion of the beast will be a period of sevens, divided into two equal portions; and we notice that the woman is in the wilderness for 1,260 days—or three and a half "times" or years, each year being reckoned as of 360 days. May it not be then that the providential preservation, represented by the hiding in the wilderness, will

extend during the whole of the former half of "the week" in which the beast acquires and consolidates his world-wide power?

Observe the twofold description in v. 17 of the remnant of the woman's seed. They "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus." Neither of these could be true without the other. There is no true obedience where the testimony of Jesus is rejected; and there is no true faith in Him where the commandments of God are not obeyed.

The Historical system seems here to be very unsatisfactory. The vision represents in other figures much that has gone before. The woman in her travail is the Church, and the subject of Pagan persecutions intended to destroy her. The rapture of the man child, with its consequences, is the elevation of Christianity to power and supremacy in the Roman Empire, the defeat of Satan's designs, and the consequent rejoicing amongst all Christians. The latter part of the vision represents the active power and influence of Satan in other forms — false doctrine and Papal persecutions against true Christianity, which, however, is preserved by God as in a wilderness, in a state of obscurity and poverty.

THE TWO BEASTS.

Chapter XIII.

ANOTHER chapter very difficult to interpret. Probably the full meaning will never be known until what it predicts shall be brought to pass. This, however, seems certain, that it reveals to us how the Dragon, Satan, carries on, and will in these last days preeminently carry on, his persecution of the godly. It reveals upon the scene the last great adversary of Christ and His people, the Antichrist of the end. Dan. vii. should be carefully compared.

THE FIRST BEAST is seen rising out of the sea, "having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." An interpretation is given in chapter xvii., together with particulars which help us to understand the description here. Read verses 9, 10, "The seven heads are seven mountains. And there are seven kings." The latter is an unfortunate translation : it should be, "And *they* are seven kings." Of these "five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come ; and when he cometh he must continue a short space." The beast represents godless secular power. The seven heads upon the beast are, with reference to the woman

whom he carries, seven hills on which she sits. But they are also with reference to the beast, seven successive kingdoms, in which the beast power is actually embodied.

"Five are fallen." At the time when the apostle was writing, the five kingdoms, which had risen and had fallen were: 1, Egypt; 2, Assyria; 3, Babylon; 4, Persia; 5, Greece. "And one is." Rome was the existing kingdom at the time when St. John was writing, and evidently the one that "is."

"And the other is not yet come."

What is this seventh kingdom that was yet to come? Has it come since the time when St. John wrote? Surely it has *not* yet come. Since the fall of the Roman power no such great world-wide empire has arisen. The seventh is yet future. What will it be? The answer is not easy, but there is reason for thinking that this seventh kingdom will be a *revival of the old Roman Empire*. We read (ch. xiii. 3) that St. John saw one of the heads of the beast "as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." Probably, it was the *seventh head* that had this appearance. In other words this seventh head is the *sixth head revived*; and the interpretation seems to be that the last great kingdom will be the now dead *Roman kingdom* revived, and possessing all its former power.

It is in his seventh-head form that the beast now appears upon the scene. Its six heads, representing the six kingdoms already named, have had their rise and fall: now appears the seventh head, representing the old Roman kingdom revived. We may assume that the ten horns and ten crowns are on this seventh head

(Dan. vii. 7), signifying that as the Roman Empire at its fall was divided into ten, so this last kingdom will be composed of ten lesser kingdoms, closely leagued together. Further, the language seems to point out an *individual*. Notice especially the use of the masculine pronoun throughout. This last kingdom will be no democracy, but a veritable kingdom, headed by a Man in whom all the chief characteristics of his kingdom will be embodied, and possessing unlimited and unchallenged power over the world, such as no king has ever yet possessed. How he obtains that power, and how he uses it, the vision clearly tells us. Before we look at the details let us read the account of the vision in Daniel vii. We read there of "four beasts," which evidently represent the (1) Babylonian, (2) Persian, (3) Grecian, and (4) Roman Empires. In verse 7, the fourth beast is described as having *ten horns*, "And there came up among them *another little horn*; and in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." What is meant by this "*little horn*" which came out of the ten horns? Some interpretation is given in vv. 23-26: "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, and the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a *time and times and the dividing of time*." Now, turning back to Rev. xiii. 5, we read: "And there was given unto him a mouth speak-

ing great things and blasphemies ; and power was given unto him to continue *forty and two months* ; and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, &c." "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, &c." The "little horn" which Daniel saw in his vision arising out of the *last*, the *Roman*, kingdom—is evidently identical with the *individual* Beast of the vision before us, the personal Antichrist.

Notice another indication of "the little horn" of Daniel in Rev. xvii. In the tenth verse St. John is told of the "seven kings," "five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come," the significance of which we have already observed ; in the eleventh verse it is added, "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the **EIGHTH**, and is of the **SEVEN**, and goeth into perdition."

The description of him in verses 3 and 8 identifies him with the beast in his seventh head form as he appears in the vision of the 13th chapter, and with the persecutor of the two witnesses, ch. xi. 7. But how is he now called the eighth ? He is "of the seven," but he cannot be one of them ; nor can he be the successor of the seven, as each of the seven had succeeded his predecessor, for this would make an eighth head to the beast. May he not be the same as the "little horn" of Daniel, the *individual* head of the seventh kingdom, in whose own person so far as possible, and beyond anything the world has ever yet seen, shall be concentrated all worldly and godless power, the beast embodied in a man ?

Compare St. Paul's prediction of the "man of

sin," "the son of perdition," 2 Thess. ii. 3, &c. Doubtless it has had and has a fulfilment in the Papacy, yet surely it awaits its full accomplishment in some future infidel power. That the Pope is Antichrist admits of no doubt; that the Antichrist is the Pope is open to question. The correspondence between "the man of sin" and the character of the Church of Rome, is so marked that the conclusion is unavoidable that the prophecy predicts her, and that she represents the prophecy. But a closer examination of St. Paul's words leads us to expect a future accomplishment in some infidel head of the infidelity which, all scripture being witness, is to characterise the time of the end—a Godless, God-denying man, who shall claim and receive for himself divine worship. There is already a modern hero-worship, blind obedience to superior will and power, and ostentatious disregard of religion in public business, which may well be the germ of the last reality of these prophecies.

Now let us look at some further details of the vision in this 13th chapter:—

Verse 1.—"And I stood," or, as is probably the better reading, *he* (*i.e.* the dragon just mentioned) stood "upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rise up out of the sea." The sea represents the great heaving mass of mankind, swayed by passion and impulse, as the waves are driven by the winds and tossed. It is out of some great revolutionary movement that the beast will arise. "And upon his heads the name of blasphemy." The spirit of the world is always "enmity against God," antagonism to Christ and His Church; but here the name applies in particular, to the seventh head, who "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God."

Verse 2.—Compare Dan. vii. 4, &c. In this last kingdom all the prominent characteristics of the former kingdoms are reproduced and combined.]

The next words tell us the whole secret of the beast's marvellous achievements ; and it is a fearful secret indeed. “The dragon gave him his power and his *throne* (so the word is) and great authority.” Here is the consummation of Satanic agency in man. Read Dan. viii. 23-27.

This will not be a new thing ; and it may help us to understand the future Antichrist if we remember the awful reality of Satanic possession now. St. Paul (Ephes. ii. 2) speaks of Satan as “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” The word which he uses for the inward action of Satan upon man’s spirit is not only a strong word—the spirit that now *energizes*, works very powerfully and effectually ; but it is the very same word which he uses to denote the operation of the Holy Spirit, when he says, “It is God that worketh in us—that energizes in us—both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” We know that in good things it is God that giveth the whole ability, the inclination of the will and the power of performance. Even so, terrible truth as it is, the evil spirit works in the children of disobedience. This is the explanation of many an atrocity and many an atrocious life of which we say, not knowing perhaps, how truly we speak, that it is Satanic. It is the explanation of the unwearied determination with which the secularist of our day goes about to make another as vile and polluted, as wretched and miserable, as himself. It is the explanation of a worldliness which no warning

and no promise can affect ; and of gratification of lust with the knowledge that the gratification means certain ruin or even death. It is the explanation of many a deathbed of indifference, of callousness, of cruel wrong, of avowed unbelief, of blasphemy even on the very verge of eternity. There is no deed and there is no habit of sin that is not at once explained by this, "The spirit that now energizes in the children of disobedience."

But not even in the worst of the human monsters of iniquity has this working of Satan been fully developed. It will be perfected in the Anti-christ. His throne and his authority are given to him by the god of this world in some special way. The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience will then so work in the hearts of men, that they shall conspire to place him in his position, to obey him implicitly, to worship him, to honour him as God. And as for his own personal power, he will be as fully energized by the evil spirit as was the human nature of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit of God.

"The dragon gave him his *throne*." This reminds us of the blasphemous temptation with which the Lord Jesus was assailed : "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for this is delivered unto me, and unto whomsoever I will I give it." It was a lie, yet with a handle of truth. Through man's sin Satan has been permitted a certain usurped power over the world. And now is he allowed to exercise it to the full, and he uses it in favour of the beast, making him his viceregent, and endowing him with his own hellish craft and power and malignity.

We need not marvel at the results. The full

energizing of Satan, his full support of his creature in the frenzy of his fury against Christ and His people, will easily account for blasphemies such as none have ever yet been able even to conceive, and for dominion such as none have ever come near to, or even ever dreamt of. See in particular verses 4 and 8 ; the former almost a parody of the worship of God : Compare Micah vii. 18 ; Psalm cxiii. 5.

Verses 5-8.—We have already noticed the period mentioned. The meaning seems to be that for forty-two months (three and a half years), the half of “the week” of the dominion of Antichrist, he will be employed in establishing and consolidating his empire ; and that not till after that will he make war with the saints and overcome them. They are kept from him till then in “the wilderness.”

Verse 8.—Observe that none will be able to stand but those whose names are in the Book of Life. It is equally true now, the only security on earth is citizenship in heaven. Make your calling and election sure, if you would have confidence in the day of temptation. But let timid and weak Christians remember that God hath from the beginning chosen them to *salvation*. They are fastened to the throne by a chain which God himself cannot break, the chain of His own eternal love. God must break Himself before He can break that. Compare Rom. viii. 35-39 ; 1 Pet. i. 5 ; 1 John ii. 18-21.

Verses 9, 10.—Particular attention is called to the narrative in the words of the Lord’s own formula.

It is not easy to see the connection between the first part of verse 10 and the last, as it stands in our version. The Greek text is uncertain.

We may however read, "If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth. If any man to be slain with the sword, with the sword should he be slain. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints," i.e. *God* appoints the trials of captivity or death by the sword (during the great tribulation), there is no escaping them; the patience and faith of the saints is shown in their endurance of these persecutions, as appointed for them: not consenting to escape by submission to the beast. Compare Jer. xv. 2. "Such as are for death, to death ; and such as are for the sword, to the sword : and such as are for the famine, to the famine : and such as are for captivity, to captivity."

Verse 11.—The SECOND BEAST. Verses 11–18.

His origin is from the *earth*. The former arose from the *sea*, he is the outcome of an utterly disordered state of things ; of society in convulsion and revolution, tossed with the strife of human passions, as the sea by the strivings of the winds of heaven. The world has seen before now, again and again, the one strong man fitted for the occasion, springing up from the tossing mass of his fellows into the place of supreme power, and assuming the reins of government. In the rising of the first beast to power will be the perfection of this.

The second beast now follows. He comes from the solid earth, from order and settlement, from society consolidated under the autocratic rule of the first beast. He is the active and energetic supporter of the first ; is endowed with devilish power to work miracles in his behalf ; and even to compel men on pain of death to worship the image of the first beast, to which he is able to impart the semblance

of life. He is lamb-like in appearance, but has all the power of the former. He is plausible and gentle by profession, but in reality is actuated by all the deadly malice of Satan. Who can this be? It seems that a person is intended. The Antichrist,—the first beast, will probably be—a kingdom indeed, but a kingdom whose king will represent the characteristics of his kingdom, not merely in an official, nominal manner, but really and personally; an individual man, in whom the blasphemy of the age shall find its full exponent. The second beast may well be an individual also; the prime minister, so to speak, of the Antichrist, and whose whole work is for the exaltation of his master. Compare ch. xix. 20, where the name given to him “the false prophet,” confirms this personal interpretation.

And yet it seems that he is the visible personal embodiment of some power.

What power? Not secular power generally; that is represented by the first beast. May it not be the power of fallen human intellect, now in the perfection of its culture, and purely godless, hating with a deadly hatred the very idea of another world than the material world of the sinner, and of any other god than Man? The story of the Fall seems to require such a development. From the beginning the law has been, “Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” The first sin sown was unbelief—Man did not believe God’s word, he preferred the Devil’s word. That shall be reaped in the universal and blasphemous rejection of God, and in the acceptance of Satan energizing the beast and speaking through him. But the first sin was also intellectual; an attempt to be “as

gods" in point of knowledge, emulating the Divine omniscience, as if to dispense with God altogether. And this too must have its proper harvest, in an intellectual ability in full growth, but self-satisfied, self-confident, and spurning alike the notion of an unseen spiritual world, and an unseen Personal God. The harvest is already ripening ; the intellect of man was never so self-asserting as now, never so confident in its own resources, never so proud in its avowed desires to show itself independent of God. And what is the tendency of intellectual influence ? It is to a rank materialism ; to a compulsory worship of the beast. "The value of wealth increases with the growing refinement of taste. The purest attributes of the human mind—the love of art, the worship of beauty, the keen sense of grace—combine to render intellectual man the slave of material prosperity." We are told that it is our wisdom to regard only the things of time and sense, to live for this world and not another, to be wholly occupied with what we can see and feel. The only immortality offered is that of being remembered here, for a few years after death. And as for God, if there be a God, he is an unknown God, and it is best to erect no altar to Him. It is undeniable that such is the character of much that we hear and read in our time, and from men of the highest attainments and culture. This second beast had "two horns as a lamb," the horns indicative of power, and the lamb of gentleness. So it is the combination of intellectual power with "gentleness," in the sense of refinement, which characterizes the infidel teaching of our time, and makes it the dangerous thing that it is. Coarse, vulgar

and ignorant abuse of Christianity in the long run defeats its own object, and produces a reaction. It is the gentle, courteous, educated, refined infidel who does the mischief, in beautiful language, and with silvery eloquence. One cannot help asking how far the ground is even now being prepared for the final triumph of such infidelity. Young people, who are led to think that to gain a high place in the class lists is everything ; whose time is so occupied with secular studies, and whose energies are so concentrated upon them that they have little time or strength for spiritual things, are likely to become an easy prey to the infidel.

Let us remember that the absolute submission to the beast, which will be required in the days of his power, will be no new thing. Now, indeed, it *seems* as if men might remain neutral, making no profession at all. But in reality there is no neutrality. At this moment every one in Christendom is either on the side of Christ or of Satan. "He that is not with Me is against Me," is the Lord's own saying. There is an invisible line drawn through all mankind, and on one side or the other stands every man, a member of the kingdom of God, or a member of the kingdom of the Evil one. The difference between then and now, will be that then, there will be no tolerance of indifference, no allowance of a neutral position. "Soul of mine! to whom do I at this moment belong? on which side am I?"

The last verse of the chapter is one of the most mysterious in the Book. Probably hundreds of solutions have been given, and yet it seems to be intimated that by wisdom and understanding, the meaning of the number of

the beast may, though not without difficulty, be attained. This itself is a difficulty in face of the innumerable differences of interpretation. It has been suggested that this is one of the points of detail left for the time of the latter day, and that when the time comes the clue will be given. Their circumstances, who are to live in and die, or to live through that last tribulation, will be peculiar indeed. We cannot tell what peculiar grace God may give them. The "number of the beast" may be part of such grace, not to be revealed until it becomes needed.

Of the many solutions which have been offered, two only seem to deserve attention:—

The one is that the number represents the Greek word *Lateinos*, and points to the Roman origin of the beast. The Roman empire, whether Pagan or Papal, has ever been *Latin*, and the numerical values of the Greek letters in the word are, when added together, exactly 666.

The other solution points to the character of the beast, as the last embodiment of godless world power. The number 6 is taken to mean earthly attainment, human excellence, without the one thing needful to make it a heavenly seven, the number of perfection. And the three sixes together are interpreted as the consummation of this; godless humanity in full growth, matured in all its parts, and fully possessed by the Evil one. It is the full number of fallen Man, expressing "all that it is possible for human wisdom and human power, when directed by an evil spirit, to achieve, and indicating a state of marvellous earthly perfection; thus the beast power has reached its highest development, when culture, civilization, art,

song, science and reason have combined to produce an age so nearly resembling perfection that men will begin to say that faith in God is an impertinence, and the hope of a future life a libel upon the happiness of the present." *

Says old Matthew Henry upon the number : "This we *know*, God has written Mene Tekel upon all His enemies ; He has numbered their days."

Let us once again remind ourselves that there is nothing in the chapter thus interpreted, to interfere with a blessed hope of the Lord's speedy coming. Some say, "if all these events are to happen before the Advent, how can we work and watch for it as for a thing which may happen in our own time?" The objection is sound. How can I watch for a person as for one who may come at any moment—and that is the Scriptural attitude of the Christian toward the coming Christ—if I am sure that he cannot come for a long time, perhaps not for years? The difficulty is removed by the consideration that these events happen after the taking up of the Church. Some think that Christ's coming to the air for His Church, and coming to the earth with His Church, are almost simultaneous events ; but careful study of the Bible leads to believe that this is not so. Christ may come at any moment for us—to-night, perhaps ; but there are intimations of an interval between that event and His coming to the earth with His saints. It is during that interval that the prophecies of these visions will have their final and full accomplishment.

Historical interpretation.—The first beast re-

* Bishop Boyd Carpenter.

presents the Roman Papacy ; its seven heads are the seven forms of government which have obtained in Rome, from King to Pope. Its ten horns are the kingdoms who acknowledged the Pope as head. Paganism received a deadly wound in the rise of Christianity, but the wound was healed in the Papal supremacy—a paganised Christianity. The description of the beast and his blasphemy closely agrees with the claims and titles of the Popes, and their conduct towards true Christianity. The second beast represents the Papal clergy, with their absolute devotion to their master, their doctrine contrary to the Gospel, while pretending to teach it, and their pretended miracles. “The image of the beast” is the Papal General Councils, at which the clergy alone spoke, and which issued the decrees of excommunication.

"LIGHT IN THE CLOUDS."

Chapter XIV.

IN the twelfth and thirteenth chapters we have had brought before us the great forces of evil, the workings of the enemies of Christ and His people ; in particular the Holy Spirit has revealed the energy of the Evil one himself in his great and willing instrument, upon whom the last vials of God's wrath are to be emptied. Let us think again that the same thing is going on even now. For, one of the most successful devices of Satan is to persuade men that he has no existence ; and we are often betrayed into self-sufficiency, and into laying aside watchfulness because we forget the working of Satan, and regard only the human instrument. There is not a child of God, however lowly his position, who is not the object of Satan's craft and malice. Notice to whom and of what particularly, St. Paul is speaking when he says, " Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God," for " we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, &c." Eph. vi. 11, 12. He speaks to husbands and wives, parents and children, to masters and servants ; and about their every-day duties. Yes, we need the

armour of God not only for the great events and temptations of our life, but also for the "common round, the daily task," however lowly may be our position. Nothing is too great for God's grace, and *nothing too little*.

This chapter—another episode before we come to the vials—is in contrast to the last ; it is a vision of comfort and assurance, set against the previous vision of the seeming triumphs of the dragon and the beast ; a vision of the working of God. It is partly retrospective and partly anticipatory ; referring backward, to some things which have been going on during the dominion of the beast and his persecution ; and also forward, to the destruction of his great city Babylon, and at least, to the beginning of the outpouring of God's wrath upon all his worshippers.

Verse 1.—St. John sees a Lamb standing on Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty-and-four thousand. We identify these with the same number sealed in chapter vii. 4, a certain definite number of the tribes of Israel, set apart for preservation during the coming trouble, by God Himself.

We saw them sealed before the sounding of the trumpets began ; we have also seen something of the trumpet judgments ; of the world-wide dominion of the beast ; of his war with the saints, and his persecution of those who would not worship him. How has it fared with God's sealed ones during this trial ? Has God's sealing been effectual ? or, in spite of it, has the beast prevailed against them ? This first verse answers the question.

It is an anticipation, evidently. The scene does not occur chronologically, before the following scenes in the chapter, but is introduced as

an assurance of the future. The sealed company are shown to us beforehand, as they will be when the trial is all over, and the beast is overthrown. And not one of them is lost ; there they stand in their full number, whatever they may have suffered ; every one of them is preserved.

There may, however, be another reason for their introduction here. The vision may be an anticipation of Christ's Millennial kingdom. He is coming soon, to dash in pieces the kingdom of the beast, to destroy him utterly, and to establish in all the world His own universal reign of Righteousness and Peace. Now, there is good reason for believing that Jerusalem will be the metropolis of His kingdom, and the Jews the great missionaries by whom the world shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. St. Paul writes in Romans xi. 12 and 15, "If the fall of them (the Israelites) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness ?" "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead ?" The vision here may be a premonition of this. St. John has seen the dominion of the beast ; the next thing he sees is an earnest of the dominion of Christ.

There is always such "light in the clouds" for the Christian. And it is well to say to ourselves in the dark hour of evil's seeming triumph, "This is but for awhile ; Christ will win the battle, the victory is already His, though His time be not yet come." Read Psalm ii. Does it not refer to this very period ? "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against

His anointed, &c." "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," v. 6.

Verses 4, 5.—The description of these 144,000, is according to their fidelity to the Lamb against the impure temptations to the idolatries of the beast, and the deceptive falsehoods of his prime minister. Or, it may be with reference to their sealing, that they have been altogether kept from those temptations—the enemy has not been able even to solicit them. "Theirs is not the triumph of the toil-worn and stained soldier, but the calm and unspottedness of those who in great part have escaped the conflict." However, they are a fit Body Guard of the Lamb. They may be "These my brethren" of Matt. xxv. 40. They are the first-fruits of the new dispensation; not as the Church is the first-fruits of God's creatures (James i. 18), but the first-fruits of the millennial harvest; perhaps, we should rather say, of the Jewish harvest.

Verse 3.—The new song is sung by the harpers, and it is sung in heaven, "before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders," while the 144,000 are on earth, on Mount Zion. Who may these heavenly harpers be? And what may be the subject of their song? The elders themselves are described as having harps in ch. v. 8, but these are distinct from the elders. The only other company throughout the Book described as having harps, are they whom St. John presently sees on the sea of glass, and who had gotten the victory over the beast, his image, his mark, and his number, and who sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, &c.," ch. xv. 2-5. There is a strong Jewish element

in this song "of Moses"; and we have seen that the Jews as a nation, will be at first, the willing subjects of the beast, and then, the chief objects of his vengeance. May not a prominent part of this company be the Jewish martyrs who suffer death rather than worship the beast? And may not these heavenly harpers who teach their new song to the 144,000 be these same Jewish martyrs, who thus make known their experiences of trial and of triumph to their brethren, who have been protected from the vengeance of the beast by the seal of God?

Let us bear in mind the time and circumstances of the vision. This is essential to a right understanding of it. When the Lord stands upon Mount Zion with the 144,000, these are the first-fruits of the dispensation then commencing—the millennial harvest. Outside of this company there is as yet not another Christian upon earth. The last vials will have been poured forth upon apostate Christendom; the beast and his followers will have been destroyed; the heathen will have been leavened; the Jewish *nation* suddenly delivered from its surrounding enemies, at the moment when utter destruction seemed imminent, will be ready for the recognition of the Messiah in their great Deliverer. But, as yet, these with the Lamb on Mount Zion, are His only *earthly* followers.

Is not this intimated in the announcement that no man could learn that song but the 144,000? For the learning intended is surely not merely that of the words of the song—the words are probably those of ch. xv. 3, 4, and their meaning is plain. The learning is the heart's knowledge of the subject of the song. None but these could truly sing of the Lamb,

for none but these knew Him in the heart ; none but these could sing the martyr's song, for none but these had the martyr's spirit.

Even so now, "eye hath not seen nor ear heard; neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. There is a beauty in the things of Christ which no natural eye can ever see, and there is a melody in the message of the gospel which no natural ear can ever hear. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ; but to them it is not given," Matt. xiii. 11. No man can truly sing the songs of Zion who is not a citizen of Zion's city. No man can sing the song of salvation who knows not what it is to be saved. "But God hath revealed them to us by His spirit :" and "God hath put a new song in our mouth, even praise unto our God," Psalm xl. 3.

There are in this loud stunning tide
 Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
 Of the everlasting chime ;
Who carry music in their heart
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

Let us not fail to notice that the description of these 144,000 in vers. 4, 5, while no doubt peculiarly true of them, indicates the inner purity (Matt. xxv. 1), the whole-hearted consecration to Christ (John xii. 24-26; Matt. xx. 22), and the final spotlessness before God

(Eph. v. 26, 27), of all those who have been justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Verses 6, 7.—The design is still the same : to cheer and sustain in the midst of the trials of the time. Observe how the belief of the gospel is associated with giving glory to God. (Compare John xvii. 4; Rom. iv. 20.) Faith in Christ gives God the glory of His truth, of His goodness, of His justice, of His wisdom, of all His perfections, as nothing else can. Christ in His person and work has manifested them as they are not seen elsewhere. This was the intention of the costly scheme of salvation ; not only to save sinners, but so, as to display the glory of God's attributes. Faith falls in with this design.

But what does the vision predict ? See Matt. xxiv. 14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." This as yet is unfulfilled. Millions have never yet heard of Christ ; many parts of the globe can hardly be said to have the gospel. But now an angel flies, signifying messengers, missionaries, "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and *to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*" Here at last is the ultimate fulfilment of Christ's prophecy. The end is now close at hand, "the hour of God's judgment is come," and the final proclamation is made. We are reminded again of the first "seal" in chapter vi., the most difficult of all the seals to interpret. Probably, it predicts the false Christ of these last times ; but some think that it signifies that there will be after the taking up of the

Church a great revival in religion. Many will be aroused out of their indifference ; and the saving power of Christ will go forth conquering and to conquer. However, the vision of the Gospel Angel seems to be the cheering assurance that even while the Antichrist is doing his worst, the gospel will be preached over the world as it never has been preached ; and not in vain, multitudes will repent and believe.

Verse 8.—Mention is made here of Babylon by anticipation, in the same way that the beast was mentioned in chapter xi. We are not told about the fall of Babylon till we reach the 17th chapter. Observe the sequence—So it always is, the Gospel is preached and Babylon falls—“Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth ?”

Verses 9 and 10.—Here is another reminder that God regards and tries the individual. If “any man” will be follower of the beast, the same shall be punished with the beast. They are fearful words which follow : Every one who worships the beast “shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, &c.”; “and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, &c.” Who shrinks not from any attempt to explain such words ? Only he who would explain them away — which may God forbid. They are figurative, but they prefigure realities of misery unmixed, unrelieved, unceasing, *unpitied*. Perhaps the awful words “in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb” indicate the perfect righteousness of the punishment, perhaps also, order and restraint of sin in that prison-house. See Proverbs i. 24–32, and Mark ix. 43–50.)

Verse 12.—“Here is the patience of the saints, who keep,” &c. (not “here are they who keep, &c.”), meaning, here is a reason for and an encouragement to patience, in the certainty of the torment for ever of all who worship the beast.

Verse 13.—“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” We are familiar with this expression, but we should remember that it is not written “Blessed are the dead,” but, “Blessed are the dead *which die in the Lord.*” It is added, moreover—“from henceforth.” Why “from henceforth”? There must be some reason for this addition. May it not well be to encourage those who will endure these last persecutions? The sickle is about to be thrust in. They will have to suffer terrible things, and they might perhaps, suppose that all was lost, because they had not been “caught up” with the Church. Encouragement therefore is given them in the assurance that, although Christ has taken His Church—nevertheless *from henceforth* there is a blessedness in the death of those who die in the Lord. As we have already noticed, in this chapter we have a brief account of a large portion of what has been told us before. It is quite probable that the “blessed” of this 13th verse are the same as the “great multitude” spoken of in chapter vii. 9, and who are described as coming out of the great tribulation. We are here told that they “rest from their labours”; an expression which fitly describes the negative portion of their blessedness: they who had gone through so much, had been afflicted, tried, and persecuted even unto death, were now to rest. And so in the earlier chapter, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst nay more, neither shall the

sun light on them, nor any heat . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," &c.

It is further said, "their works do follow them." Surely this, too, is some special assurance for them. Whatever they have done for Christ, during those dark days, will be remembered by Him ; the least thing done for Him will not be forgotten ; their works will all be in heaven. Of course we may, and do, take these words, as intended for ourselves ; we are not excluded from this verse, because others are peculiarly intended. And herein is a lesson taught us which we do well to learn, so as never to forget it. Our works follow us ; they do not go *before* us, nor even *with us*, into heaven ; they *follow* us. The first question is, How shall *I* be accepted of God ? not, How shall my works be accepted ? So we read in Genesis iv. 4, "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering"—the person first, and then his offering. Indeed, it is true that the very least thing that we have ever done for Christ will be remembered, yet the works will not admit us—*we* must be accepted first, and then our works will follow.

Verse 14.—THE HARVEST.—The figure is frequently used for the gathering into the Lord's garner of the Lord's people. Here it seems to mean the gathering in of the great multitude out of "that great tribulation." It is Christ Himself who is represented by the One who sat over the cloud. (Compare Mark iv. 29.) There is no difficulty in the address to Him by the Angel, for the Angel is not commanding, but conveying the declared will of God concerning a consummation which belongs to those "times and seasons which the

Father hath kept in His own power." (Compare Rev. i. 1.) Observe, the sickle is Christ's, and in Christ's hand, who Himself is the Reaper. The wicked are a sword of His. The persecutor of every age and of every sort can do no more of himself against the Christian, than a sickle can reap of itself. Christ uses him, he is Christ's instrument, but the agent is the dear Lord Himself. He deals with us, as He was dealt with. (*See Acts iv. 27-29.*) And we may say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Verses 17-20.—THE VINTAGE.—This is a very different thing from the harvest. It belongs to the last outpouring of the great wrath of God upon His enemies.

Verse 18.—The altar is that from which the prayers of the saints have ascended, ch. vi. 9, viii. 3. God's judgments are in answer to those prayers.

Verse 20.—The city which will be the scene of this unparalleled carnage, is probably Jerusalem, ch. xi. 2. The description that the blood was "even unto the horse bridles" signifies the fearful severity of the judgment; and the 1,600 furlongs indicate its completeness—the four quarters multiplied by four and then by a hundred. We are reminded of similar passages in Isaiah lxiii.: "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart" (verses 3 and 4); again in verse 6, "I will tread down the people in mine anger, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." These words surely refer, not to Christ's death and sacrifice

for us, but to the “wrath of the Lamb,” the Lord’s taking vengeance.

So, then, we seem to have in this chapter an epitome of some of the chief events of that future period. First, we have the 144,000 (sealed in chapter vii.) true Israelites, who will be the first-fruits of the millennium-harvest. Then the effectual preaching of the Gospel during the great tribulation, by means of which large numbers will be eternally saved. Then the anticipation of the fall of Babylon. Next comes an intimation of what the followers of the beast are doomed to suffer. In verses 13 to 16 we read of the reaping, or gathering in, of all those who, faithful to Christ, die by persecution during the tribulation. And lastly, the vintage of the earth, the pouring out of God’s wrath upon His enemies; an anticipation, perhaps, of chapter xix. 17-21.

Notice how the “harvest” of the earth corresponds with the world-wide proclamation of the gospel; and the “vintage” with the solemn warnings on those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark.

The whole series of visions seems to be a cheering assurance of the working of God, accomplishing His purposes of grace, even in the seeming successes of evil, overruling the adversary even in the hour of his triumph, and bringing him to destruction.

Notice also that while it is the Son of Man who reaps the harvest, it is the Angel who gathers the vintage. True it is the Lord who executeth all judgment upon His enemies. But in the contrast here it is “as though He cherished as His own prerogative the harvest of the earth, and were glad to delegate to other hands the

vintage. It is as though the ministry of mercy were His chosen office, and the ministry of wrath His stern necessity.*

Historical interpreters see in this chapter a sketch of the character of the Reformers as representatives of the true Church. They alone could truly sing the song of the Reformation, though the nations and princes might rejoice in its earthly benefits. A comparatively small number, an election only, had any real appreciation of divine gospel truth. A state of general deadness and darkness followed. But there is a cheering assurance that the hour was at hand for a revival, and of the speeding forth throughout the world of the missionaries of the gospel, as never before. This is followed by a general intimation of impending judgments upon the Papacy and her followers ; of the translation of the Church to glory—the harvest of the earth ; and of the judgment that shall at last descend upon apostate Christendom—the vintage. The visions indicate impressions of these things upon the minds of the faithful few, to strengthen and reassure them.

* Dr. Vaughan.

PREPARATION FOR THE VIALS.

Chapter XV.

THIS chapter resumes the general history, and brings us very near the end. We have seen the powers of hell, and the powers of heaven at work, and in the closing verses of chapter xiv. we were shown something of the impending judgment, the last world-wide judgment of God. We have had the vision of the Seals and the vision of the Trumpets, and now we are coming to the vision of the Vials. As yet no description has been given of the seventh seal, or of the seventh trumpet. The sixth seal and the sixth trumpet both lead us up to the very eve of Christ's coming ; but then, as we expect to be told about that event, the history is interrupted. Perhaps these seven vials are not so much a separate series of judgments as the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet broken up into seven parts. However, they are the "last plagues," the last visitation of judgment, before the personal advent of the Lord to the earth.

Verse 1.—We are not told who the seven angels are, and it is useless to conjecture.

Verse 2.—“And I saw as it were a sea of glass

mingled with fire." The sea in Scripture is a type of the seething mass of mankind, tossed to and fro by the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. But the sea spoken of in this verse is described as a "sea of *glass*." The word suggests solidity, transparency and tranquillity, and we may think that it means here the calmness and solidity of God's judgment, as opposed to the surging and turbulent motions of man. This sea of glass is mingled with "fire." The fire of God's consuming wrath against sin, is now about to go forth: but there is no haste, no disturbance of the Divine calm, in the swiftest and severest of his judgments.

Upon this sea St. John saw "them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, having the harps of God." Their "victory" was not in saving their lives, but in that they could suffer death rather than submit to the enemy.

"The harps of God." Things that are very excellent and eminent are often said in the Old Testament to be "of God"—the "trees of God," the "hills of God," for example. Of course this does not mean that the trees and hills thus specified belong to God more than any others, but that they are higher and nobler than other trees or hills. So the "harps of God" may signify perfect harps, such as have never been heard before, in perfect tune, and everything of them excellent and beautiful. But something more is intended. There is a beautiful expression in Job xxxv. ver. 10, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" So David, "I will sing of mercy *and judgment*," Pslm. ci. 1. If any one is able to sing of judg-

ment, and in the night of affliction, when all is dark and gloomy, his songs are not learnt from *man*, we may be quite sure of that. It is *God* that giveth *songs in the night*. So, the "harps of God" suggest to us that the songs which we shall sing in glory, will be of *God's* teaching, *He* will be our great Music Master; and if *He* now teaches us to sing in the *night-time* of affliction, how will *He* then teach us to sing in the *day-time* of glory?

Verse 3.—"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." In Exodus xv. the song of Moses is recorded. It was a song of victory over Pharaoh and his hosts. A similar song is now sung in heaven, for victory over Satan and his host. This, however, is by anticipation.

We notice that they sing the song of Moses and the *song of the Lamb*. How constantly the Lord Jesus is thus brought forward! Throughout the whole Book of Revelation we have this figure of the *Lamb*; a figure not of meekness and patience, but of atonement for sin. See note on ch. xxii. 3.

The song is not double, but one. It is a song of deliverance (Moses) to the praise of the great Deliverer (the Lamb). See chap. xii. 11. They stand not on the surface, but on the shore, as it were, of the sea—as Israel stood upon the shore of the Red Sea and sang their song of triumph.

Verse 4—"Thy judgments are made manifest." The whole process of God's judgments will be seen to have been one of pure righteousness. Often *now* God's dealings with man are great mysteries, we cannot understand His judgments, but *then* they will be made manifest. We shall know hereafter.

Verses 5, 6.—“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.” “And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.” We noticed, when reading chapter xi., that the word translated temple means the innermost place ; signifying the true *spiritual Church*, the Church within a Church, marked off and preserved. The same word is used in this 5th verse. It is from this inner place that the seven angels, having the seven plagues come forth ; not only forth from God, but figuratively, from His Church ; and it is *one of His saints* who gives the seven vials to the angels. Further, these judgments which are now to come upon the earth, and of which we shall read in the next chapter, are not calls to repentance ; there is nothing but wrath now. Does not all this remind us that out of our greatest mercies, if neglected, will come our heaviest judgments ? If we reject Jesus Christ and His salvation, and so shut out ourselves from that inner temple of His Church, from that place, as it were, our judgments will come. Rejected salvation will be *the condemnation*. The stone which God has laid for a foundation will fall upon and grind to powder those who refuse it. We are told in chapter vi. 16, that all who have rejected Christ will call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. *That* face, which we who love Him long to see, they will not then turn from in indifference, they will wish to hide themselves from it. Why ? Because of the “wrath of the Lamb.” What a fearful expression this is ! It is per-

haps the most fearful in the whole Bible. "The wrath of the *Lamb*"; as if His very love for sinners—and we have but a dim idea of that wondrous love—must, if rejected, *turn into wrath*; wrath that will be as terrible as the love has been wonderful. "The wrath of the Lamb" is likened to "*oil on fire*." There is nothing so soft, so smooth and healing in its properties as oil, and yet if that oil is on fire there is nothing more consuming. So we may say, there is nothing so tender as the *love* of the Lamb, but when that love shall be turned to *wrath*, nothing will be more fierce. Compare Pslm ii. 12.

The opening of the temple and the coming forth of the angels therefrom may however, indicate that it is even from the God of the ark of the covenant, from a covenant God in Christ, that these vial judgments come. God not only promises salvation by oath to the believer, but He is under his own oath also to visit with everlasting destruction those who choose to remain His enemies. And His faithfulness will be seen in the infliction of the vengeance as well as in the bestowment of the mercy.

Verse 7.—These living creatures, one of whom gives these vials into the hands of the angels, represent the highest order amongst the redeemed. Thus we have another intimation that God's people take part in these last judgments. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" "He that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let the high praises of God be in their

mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishments upon the people, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron ; such honour have all His saints." These "vials" were, as the Greek word signifies, shallow bowls or cups ; similar to those in which incense was offered in the temple. The awful thought has been suggested by this that "the very punishment of sin is in a certain sense an offering of incense to God."*

Verse 8.—"And the temple was filled with smoke, and no man was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." Compare Isaiah vi. 4. The meaning seems to be that it is too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice ; access to God is no longer possible ; there is no more salvation now until the plagues be past. God's dispensation for the immediate future is one of pure unmixed wrath, of "judgment without mercy." The verse reminds us of those solemn words in the first chapter of Proverbs which may refer to the very time of which we are speaking,—"Because I (Christ, as Wisdom) have called and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; *I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh.* Then shall they call upon Me, but *I will not answer* ; they shall seek Me early, but *they shall not find me.*" (Prov. i. 24-29.) These are solemn and startling words. And they are not for that future day only. They are illustrated from time to time in individual history. God's spirit will not always strive ; the day of grace may be even shorter than the day of life. There

* Dr. Vaughan.

is a fearful "too late." Behold, *now* is the accepted time ; behold, *now* is the day of salvation. It is this which makes the life that now is, and is made up of but a few short years, of infinite importance. God, who made us, has willed it that we should be for eternity, according to our treatment of His Gospel now. Now the choice is put before every one of us, life or death, everlasting ; Christ or self. But if any man goes down to the grave an impenitent refuser of so great salvation, or having neglected it, there is, so far as we know, no more Gospel of Christ, and no more striving of the Spirit for him—the door into God's Temple, into the Church of Christ's salvation, is for ever shut against him.

To the Historical interpreters the vision of the 15th chapter seems to foretell that during the first five vials, which are judgments to be poured out on Papal Christendom, there would be some of Christ's true people, who, kept in safety, would be roused to some joyful anticipation of Christ's coming kingdom. This was fulfilled in the preservation of England in the great dangers of the time of the French Revolution ; in the revival of religion, and the outbreak of a missionary spirit at the close of the last century, when our present great missionary societies were founded.

THE SEVEN VIALS.

Chapter XVI.

THERE can be no doubt that the judgments of the vials are not only prolonged to the very end, but that the whole series belongs to the time immediately preceding the end. By some, the visions are understood to be descriptive of the utterly wretched, hardened, and corrupted condition into which the godless world will finally have sinned itself, rather than distinct acts of Divine judgment upon it. First, we are shown in "the noisome and grievous sore," a figure of some hateful mental or moral disease, affecting the worshippers of the world, and destroying their false peace and self-satisfaction. This is followed by universal and extreme corruption of public morality; the sea, a type of the great seething mass of mankind, and out of which the beast arose, is turned into blood, foul and loathsome, as the emanation from a corpse. Then a similar corruption of those influences which affect the public heart and mind, flowing into it as the rivers into the ocean,—literature, science, art, music, and such like. The fourth vial upon the sun, indicates the light of knowledge that has set itself above God, and is now become

a scorching pain to heart and conscience, while hardening both into reckless impenitent blasphemy. Hence follow utter moral darkness, confusion and disorder, and inability to repent, even while men gnaw their tongues for the pain of their own sin. The Euphrates of public sentiment is dried up ; there is no longer any protecting boundary of at least common morality, and respect for outward decencies of life ; the forces of evil are now quite unrestrained, and fully and freely break out into the utmost possibilities of shameless excess. And so "the spirits of the devils," working upon human depravity, easily persuade men to the consummation of iniquity, upon which the Lord shall descend in the flaming fire of consuming vengeance.

That such will be among the characteristics of the last generation of these days is doubtless true. The world, as distinct from the Church, will grow worse and worse, its ultimate state will be as thus pictured, and the visions of the vials may be understood to prefigure it. But this consummation of wickedness will have been gradually arrived at ; and the language of the prophecy seems to be more than descriptive of the ultimate issues of sin now working. It predicts also, and this is its closer meaning, distinct judgments inflicted at the time, and directly from God ; punishments falling swift and sudden and unprecedented ; plagues literally thus inflicted upon the great Antichrist and his followers, preparatory to their destruction.

Verse 2.—The first "vial" is poured out upon the earth ; and the men which had the mark of the beast are afflicted with a noisome and grievous sore. We may take this literally,

that in these days men will be afflicted in the manner described. The judgment is like one of the plagues upon the Egyptians. We read in Exodus ix. 8-11, that Moses took ashes of the furnace and sprinkled it towards heaven, and it became a *boil* breaking forth with *blains* upon man and upon beast. If God did so then, may He not send a like plague again? However, it is evidently a *personal* evil that is intended, and it seems that it will be *general*; it may be something similar to that of which Zechariah writes, ch. xiv. 12, "Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth."

Verse 3.—"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man." Again we are reminded of a like plague which fell upon the Egyptians. Exodus vii. ver. 19. Literally, God turned the waters of rivers, streams, and ponds into blood, and no one could drink of the waters because they were blood. God did this once, may He not do it again? We notice that the sea became as the blood of a *dead man*, which would be even more foul and more revolting than the blood of a *living* man; and we may be sure that horrible as are these figures, more horrible still will be the reality.

Verse 4.—"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood." Again there is no reason to suppose that this will not be literally fulfilled. Throughout the dominions of the beast at least, the sources of drink will, it seems, be so cursed. See verse 6.

Verses 5 and 6.—God's judgments are *retributive* judgments. It is written, "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap"; and here we see that it is so: "They have shed the *blood* of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them *blood* to drink."

Verse 7.—"And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." The words are probably spoken by one of those martyrs under the altar whom we read of in chapter vi. 9.

Verse 8.—In the latter part of this verse read, "Power was given unto *it*," not *him*; meaning, power was given unto the sun to scorch men. We still may keep to the idea of a literal fulfilment; there will be some affection of the sun, which will cause unbearable suffering. "The men"—probably those who receive the mark and number of the beast—"were scorched with great heat." Another thought is suggested. Intense heat, taking it literally, would cause intense thirst, and yet there is nothing fit for drinking, for the rivers and fountains are turned into *blood*; the judgments are accumulated.

Verse 9 shows us what effect all this has upon men. In spite of this fearful outpouring of God's wrath, and the bodily suffering they undergo, yet "they blasphemed the name of God." We are reminded that no amount of suffering, *without the grace of God*, will make men repent or turn to God. The Romish idea of purgatory is entirely set aside by the teaching of this verse. Notice how their sin is further described, "And they repented not to give Him glory." God is glorified by a sinner's

repentance. We may sometimes be tempted to think that we cannot give glory to God in any definite way ; but let us remember that we *do* glorify Him by our very repentance ; because thereby we assent to His attitude towards sin, and we acknowledge the righteousness of His commandments concerning the turning away from sin.

Verse 10.—“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast ; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.”

This judgment is poured out upon the throne of the beast, indicating that it is his kingdom which is to be thus darkened, as when the plague of darkness fell upon the Egyptians—a darkness that might be felt. (Ex. x. 21.) God may send such a plague again. We have just heard that the sun will give such heat that men will be scorched, yet God may prevent all light. It is fearful to think of a scorching heat, and yet no light.

Verse 12.—“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates.” They who take the Historical view of the Revelation agree in thinking that we are living under this sixth seal, and that the drying-up of the river Euphrates spoken of in the verse signifies the weakening of the Turkish power. This may be true as an initial fulfilling of the prophecy, but its ultimate accomplishment may well be the literal drying up of the great river. The gathering together of the kings to the great battle against God is now close at hand, and therefore God causes the river to dry up. He removes every impediment, that the way of the kings who come from the East may be prepared.

A symbolical meaning has been given to the language, which is very interesting. The Euphrates is the great separating boundary between Palestine and the outside hostile world on the North and on the East. So, there is a protecting boundary of public opinion and feeling between Christianity and its deadly foes. "Men may be hostile to spiritual religion, yet they scarcely like to shock public sentiment." But "there may come a time when the public sentiment loses all sense of shame, and the decorums of life which have acted as a breakwater against the tide of outrageous evil are swept away."* That such will be the case as the end draws near is very certain. It would be closely typified by the drying up of the great barrier between Israel of old and her invaders.

Verse 13.—And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs, &c. These are plainly interpreted to be the spirits of devils to gather the kings together to battle. We are reminded of the interview (1 Kings xxii.), when Micaiah tells king Ahab that "the Lord hath put a *lying spirit* in the mouth of all these thy prophets, to persuade the king to battle." Of these three unclean spirits the one, from the mouth of the *dragon*, may represent the spirit of hateful infidelity; the second, out of the mouth of the *beast*, the spirit of earthly-mindedness; and the third, out of the mouth of the *false prophet*, the spirit of unsanctified intellectual culture. Yet, they are "the spirits of *devils*, working miracles." The inspired explanation must not be explained away. The influences will be Satanic.

It is remarkable how the Scripture ascribes to the last anti-Christian power the working of

* Bishop Boyd Carpenter.

signs and wonders as means of deception. (See Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9.)

Verse 15.—The battle of the great day (ver. 14), is doubtless the same as that in ch. xix. 18, &c., and the victory is won by the sudden personal appearance in glory, with all His saints, of the King of Kings Himself. Hence the declaration in this verse and the call to readiness. We may consider it as the Lord's word to each of ourselves. But it has a particular reference here to the sudden and unexpected manner in which the Lord will then break in upon that ungodly infidel host, and consume them in a moment. At the same time, it seems to indicate some secret intimation to the faithful, in that darkest hour, of the near approach of the dawn; to strengthen them to be the more watchful against the surrounding and accumulating powers of evil. Compare 1 Thess. v. 2, &c.

"Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments," &c. The idea seems to be that of one expecting the advent of the thief, and watching for him clothed and ready for action, instead of laying aside his garments and retiring to sleep.

Verse 16.—The place of battle is called Armageddon—that is the mountain of Megiddo. The place was a great battle field of Old Testament times (see Judges v. 19; 2 Chron. xxxv. 22). The name may, therefore, well be used *figuratively*, to denote the final overthrow of the Lord's enemies. But it looks as if the battle would be in the neighbourhood of the literal mountain; the words "a place called" would hardly have been used except of a literal locality usually so named.

Verse 17-21.—The Seventh Vial.—It is done.

The declaration is again anticipatory. In the effects of the last vial shall be accomplished all that God intends to do before the end; and that end is so immediately certain, that it is as good as come. The usual accompaniments of the close of the series of visions are given, the voices and thunders, &c., together with an unprecedented earthquake. Great Babylon, whose destruction is more particularly described in the next chapter, comes up before God to be dealt with; and there is a hail of great stones from the Lord out of heaven—some real physical infliction. Attention is again called to the fact that the hardened became only the more hardened under their punishment. Once more we are taught that no severity of judgments, or of personal suffering, without the grace of God, will make men repent; “They blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues.”

In the Historical system the Vials are poured out on Papal Christendom :—

1. The outbreak of moral and social evil in the great French Revolution, 1789.
2. Destruction by war, especially by the naval wars, 1792–1805.
3. Wars on the banks of the great rivers of Europe, between France, Germany and Austria.
4. The conquests of Napoleon, and his power over the sovereign authorities of Europe, and the blasphemous wickedness of the period.
5. The Abolition of the Pope’s temporal authority, and the persistence of the people in Mariolatry and other sins of the Church of Rome.

6. The marked decay of the Turkish Empire preparatory to the restoration of the Jews.

The three frogs represent the spirit of Infidelity, of Popery, and of Ritualism. The latter verse of the chapter predicts the circumstances of revolution, wars and tumults, and trouble in which the end will be reached.

BABYLON.

Chapters XVII., XVIII.

YET another pause in the history before the final consummation, now so near at hand. Mention has been made of the destruction of Babylon under the last vial; but such is Babylon that God sees fit to set out in detail both her character and her destruction. God will have us know what she really is before Him, under all her outward magnificence and with all her fascination, and how marked and severe will be His vengeance upon her. One of the vial-angels bids St. John "Come hither and I will show thee the judgment of the great whore," &c. (ver. 1-2). Forthwith he is carried "into the wilderness"—perhaps that the splendour of the woman's appearance might be more conspicuous by contrast—and there he saw "a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."

Then follows a most suggestive and striking description of the woman (ver. 4-7). The Seer tells that when he saw her he wondered with great admiration (*i.e.*, wonder). The unnecessary question is often asked and is variously answered, what made St. John wonder? It

would have been a wonder had he not wondered at such a magnificent and yet monstrous spectacle. The angel goes on to explain it. And first he tells him about the beast on which the woman sat (vers. 8-15). There can be no doubt that this is the same beast as in chapter xiii. i. Observe the common features—the seven heads and ten horns and names of blasphemy. There, one of his heads was seen as it were “wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed.” The same thing is implied in the description here, “he was and is not, and shall ascend out of the abyss,” &c. (ver. 8). Further, we are told here that the beast “makes war with the Lamb;” this identifies him with the beast of chapter xix. 19, who again is identified with the beast of chapter xiii., by the mention of the false prophet that wrought miracles before him,” &c. (xix. 20). It is not to be supposed that when the woman is seen upon the beast, he had not yet appeared under his seventh-head form, the ten-horned head. The expression, “Who was, and is, and is not,” (or “shall ascend” ver. 8), seems to be a general description of the beast under this head, with reference of course to its peculiar history, as the sixth head, wounded to death and revived.

Observe here how his truly Satanic character is expressed—he cometh out of the abyss. And he goeth into perdition; he has received of the dragon’s power, and he shall partake of the dragon’s portion. (*See* chapter xix. 20; xx. 10.)

Verse 9.—Particular and careful attention is called to what follows.

Verse 10, &c.—The seven heads are said to have a twofold meaning, (1) “They are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth.” To

this we shall return presently. (2) They are seven kings, &c., *i.e.*, they represent the seven forms of empire, seven successive world-wide kingdoms, in which the abstract secular-power represented by the beast is embodied. Five of these—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece had fallen when St. John wrote, Rome still existed, and the seventh was (and is) yet to come. (See notes on chapter xiii.)

Verse 11.—The meaning seems to be not that there will be an eighth head, but that under the seventh head there will be an individual, the king himself, of the seventh kingdom, in whom personally, as in none other, all the characteristics of the beast will be displayed—the personal Antichrist or Man of sin. (See notes, chapter xiii.)

Verses 12, 15.—The ten horns are upon the seventh head; that is to say, the seventh kingdom, which is yet to come—the revived Roman Empire—will be a confederation of ten kingdoms agreed to use their power and strength together, and to support the individual Man of sin. They receive power “as kings”; *i.e.*, they are truely kings, but submit their kingly power entirely to the beast. They shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. See ch. xix. 19, &c.

Verse 16 is a remarkable revelation. The woman was first seen clad in splendid raiment, riding upon the beast with its ten horns upon its seventh head; that is to say, she is supported by them. Now they turn upon her, cast her from her seat and rend her, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire—the most signal instance, perhaps, in all history, of the false love and false friendship of the

world, that ever turns upon its object when its own selfish purposes can thus be best advanced.

We have now to consider the woman herself. The angel's description of her is brief. Ver. 15, "The waters where the whore sitteth are peoples and multitudes, &c. ;" and ver. 18, "The woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." The character of the woman is fully described in the vision itself, vers. 4-7. Observe particularly ver. 5, Upon her forehead was a name written — MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. The "mystery" seems to indicate that the name which follows is symbolical, that it was a title adopted because of an intention beneath the surface. Who then is the woman, mystically called Babylon ? With common consent interpreters answer—Rome. Rome would of course be understood "as that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," in the time of St. John. Rome was the famous seven-hilled city (ver. 9). The language throughout justifies the unanimous appropriation of it to Rome. But in what sense is Rome intended ? A comparison of chs. xvii. 16 and xviii. 9 indicates a twofold sense. In the former chapter the kings of the earth who first supported the woman, become the enraged agents of her destruction. In the subsequent chapter they are represented as bewailing and lamenting the fall of the great city, and are struck with amazement, standing afar off, lest they should be involved in her destruction.

How is this? It is certain that in both chapters Rome is intended. It seems equally certain that there must be some difference of

intention. In this 17th chapter there can be little doubt but the Rome intended is Papal Rome. Rome the city, but as the centre, the head, the representative of the Papacy. The identification is complete. The woman's unchaste character, her purple and scarlet array, her lavish personal adorning with gold and precious stones, her golden cup of abominations, her seat upon many waters ("peoples and nations, &c."), her cruelty ("drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"),—all these characteristics have been, and are still so exactly reproduced in the Church of Rome, that there seems to be no possibility of mistake in identifying the woman with the Papacy. She is the great harlot Church of history, corrupt and foul in her doctrine and practice, beyond the power of language to express; the author of spiritual corruption and depravity all over the world; extending to sinful man the poisoned cup of doctrines cunningly adapted to the depravity of his heart; using gold and precious stones, architecture and painting, and sculpture and music to fascinate men's senses with a purely sensuous service; claiming and in great part receiving a worldwide supremacy over all kings and all peoples, over their very hearts and consciences; her record written in the torture-chambers of the Inquisition, with the blood of St. Bartholomew's day, and by the light of the fires of Smithfield; a record of a nothing less than Satanic cruelty against the saints of Christ.

It may be said that the woman in the vision is described not as once she was, but as she is still at the time of the vision, seated upon the beast in his last development; and has not the

Papacy long since fallen from her supremacy over the nations? has she not ceased to be a persecutor, and laid aside the worst of her corruptions? The answer is this—As for her character and her attitude towards Christ's truth, Popery is unchanged. Her own books and teachers being witness, there is not in her one trace of regret for the worst of all her cruel persecutions, and there is not a corruption, whether in doctrine or practice, which befouled her and made her loathsome in the past, which is not to be found within her in the present. Popery of the nineteenth century is no improved church. The woman's character is beyond improvement. She is now the same Popery, the same in her loathsome abominations, the same in her bloodthirsty cruelty—the very same Popery that reigned supreme in the dark ages. What the Church of Rome was, the Church of Rome is; what the Church of Rome did, the Church of Rome would do again to-day, had she the power. And as for her supremacy; some may persuade themselves that in the enlightenment of the present day, in the diffusion of knowledge, and in the spread of liberty, there are ample securities against any revival of a system so corrupt and false and degrading and enslaving as that of Popery. But we have to deal with facts and not mere opinions. And the real fact is, that Popery is not dead, nor dying, but reviving and manifesting increasing vitality every year. An advance has recently been made, so to speak, all along the line. There is stir and activity within the confines of the Papacy which seems to be born of well-grounded hope. Roman Catholic officials hardly care to conceal their expectation of great

things for Popery before long. Popery is not dead, but reviving. And it may well be that in that latter day to which the vision belongs, and when Satan shall be allowed a power such as he has never yet had—it may well be that the woman shall once more ride in triumph on the beast, that the Church of Rome shall for a while, be lifted by the revived Roman empire to even more than her old supremacy.

Then her destruction shall come. The very powers who have supported her shall be the instruments in God's hands of her utter and final degradation.

Observe then, what God thinks about Popery, and how God will deal with her. Let the prophecy of her coming desolation and overthrow teach us more firmly to eschew and repudiate, "not the principles of direct Popery only, or even of the modern Tractarian semi-Popery (which is but in truth that earlier form of the Great Apostacy revivified, to which in due time and through Satanic artifice, Rome did but furnish the fitting headship), but also of every modification of the same, which may seek to make religion a thing *ecclesiastical* rather than a thing personal and spiritual; and to interpose the Church with its priesthood and services and sacraments between the soul and Christ."*

Now let us read chap. xviii. The destruction of Babylon thus foretold is clearly not to be separated from that of the woman; yet the one is not to be identified with the other. The destruction of the woman is apparently gradual; this of Babylon is awfully sudden. That was through the instrumentality of the kings of the earth, who hate the whore; this is by the direct

* Elliott. *H. A.*

and immediate hand of God, while the kings of the earth lament in astonishment and fear.

It is apparently, of the *City* of Rome as distinguished from the *Church* of Rome, that this 18th chapter prophesies; the final destruction of the literal material city itself. Some have supposed that in the latter day, the ancient Babylon will be rebuilt and again destroyed; and, perhaps, there is room to say that the Old Testament prophecies against the literal Babylon have hardly been fulfilled. But it cannot be maintained that this is the Babylon of the prophecy before us. The time of the vision we remember, is that of the revivified Roman empire, under the Antichrist, in all the plenitude of his power; and is it not certain that Rome itself will be the metropolis of that empire, the capital city of the Antichrist? It may be said that the Babylon of this chapter is a great commercial city, which Rome never has been. But the description may well be that of a great central city to which all the commerce of the world contributes. Or, we may ask, if she is to become the world's capital, in that future day when human wisdom and might and art and science will be at their height, may not Rome then be what she has never been, as well as the perfection of all that she ever has been, so that every item of this description of Babylon shall be literally reproduced in her?

Her destruction is manifestly to be by some signal judgment direct from God's own hand, and the language of the whole description points to an earthquake and volcanic eruptions. There is no gradual wasting away here. In "one hour" she is made desolate. And the smoke of her burning, and the standing afar off of the kings,

alike point to a catastrophe, as if the earth opened her mouth to receive her, and belched forth flame to consume her.

It is a remarkable fact that the Campagna which surrounds Rome, is full of combustible substance. It is said that the entire district is volcanic, and that if you place a stick or a stone in one of the pools, you will find after a few hours, that an incrustation of bituminous matter has commenced. Geologists declare that the wonder is, not that hereafter under the Divine decree ignition should take place, but that the judgment should have been suspended so long, and that the fires with which the Campagna is stored, should not yet have burst forth.

Notice the words of the voice from heaven in ver. 4, "Come out of her, my people," &c. Compare the warning to Lot to escape from Sodom (Gen. xix. 15, &c.) ; and the warning to Israel to flee from the neighbourhood of Dathan and Abiram (Numb. xvi. 23) ; also the Lord's warning in Matt. xxiv. 16. It appears that even in the Rome of the Antichrist there will be some of the Lord's true people who will be in danger of sharing in her ruin by lingering amidst her seductions.

Verse 6.—The voice that speaks is not that of the saints, but the voice from heaven to the executioners of judgment. Omit the word "you." The words should be "Repay her as she also repaid, and double, &c." Compare Psalms lxxix. 12 and cxxxvii. 8 ; Isaiah xl. 2.

Verses 6, 7.—Observe how she is dealt with retributively. Every item of her sin is to have its item of punishment ; and as she thought herself the Eternal City, so her plagues destroy her in one day, in one hour.

Verses 9-20.—As before observed, though Rome was not a commercial city herself, yet the description very truly applies to such a city as Rome was, the converging point of all roads from every quarter of the globe; creating and sustaining commercial activity as here described. Such Rome has been, such in perfection Rome may be again. Compare Ezekiel xxvii.

Verse 20.—Rebukes the false charity which dishonours God by fraternizing with the enemies of Christ and His kingdom.

Verse 21.—Again by a strong figure is set forth the awful suddenness, and the completeness beyond all recovery, of Babylon's destruction. Compare Jer. li. 63, 64.

Verse 24.—Is true enough of Papal Rome, and will be true again of the Rome of the beast in his last anti-Christian form. Compare chap. xiii. 7, 10, 15. Let us remember that in all worldliness there is the same hatred of Christ, the same spirit of antagonism to Him, and that the natural tendency of it is to the murder of His people—"Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 19.)

Learn from the whole chapter what God thinks of worldliness, and how He will punish it. See 1 John ii. 15-18 and James iv. 4.

"Judge in thyself, O Christian ! is it meet
 To set thine heart on what beasts set their feet ?
 'Tis no hyperbole if you be told,
 You delve for dross with mattocks made of gold.
 Affections are too costly to bestow
 Upon the fair-faced nothings here below ;
 The eagle scorns to fall down from on high,
 The proverb saith, to pounce upon a fly ;
 And can a Christian leave the face of God
 T'embrace the earth, and doat upon a clod ?"

But observe also the compensation : " Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord " (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). At a certain mission service the subject for the evening was the parable of the prodigal son. Amongst the audience was one of the waifs and strays of our London streets, a poor orphan boy. He had never heard that parable before. His attention became riveted, his eyes glistened with tears, and at the close he was heard to say with a sigh, " Oh, I wish I had a father." What did the boy mean ? Perhaps he had never seen his father, or his father may have been unworthy of the name, or he may have had a true father and was thinking of him now dead and gone. However, what the boy wanted was such a father as He of the parable ; a father to feed him, to clothe him, to care for him, to love him ; a father to whom he might go, and upon whom he might rely. That was the meaning of the poor little outcast's sigh, " Oh, I wish I had a father." And that is just what we want. The yearning of the poor outcast sinner could not be better expressed. And that is what is offered to us in the Gospel. We thank God that He does not send us mere great and beautiful words which mean nothing. It is to a true Sonship that we are called, and a real Fatherhood. To a Sonship which confers all a child's portion, all a child's rights, ay and a child's heart too, with its happy, loving, trustful confidence ; and to a Fatherhood which means all a Father's care, all a Father's provision, ay and a Father's heart, with all its overflowing affection.

THE ADVENT.

Chapter XIX.

WE have in this chapter the great event for which the whole book has been a preparation. In the very first chapter (ver. 7) we noticed how St. John, as he sits down to write, gives expression to his pent-up feelings: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Thus, the key-note to the book is the second coming of Jesus Christ. That blessed hope is now realized in the chapter before us.

In the first verses we read of the heavenly host singing and praising God. Observe the frequency throughout the Book, of praise in heaven. At each new stage of the Revelation the song of adoration and thanksgiving ascends. Our days would be more "as the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut. xi. 21) if there were more of praise in them. Here, this multitude praises God for His judgments upon His enemies; they say, "True and righteous are His judgments," &c. We must never forget that, while we rejoice in the goodness and love of God, we must not shut our eyes to His justice and severity against

sin. "God is love," that we know; but He is also "a consuming fire." It is a false and sickly sentimentality which represents God as only goodness—"A God all mercy is a God unjust." God must be just, and God's justice will visit those who spurn His mercy. "Behold therefore the goodness *and severity* of God," Rom. xi. 22.

Verse 1.—The word "Alleluia" is mentioned here for the *first* time in this book; and it is interesting and profitable to notice that the first time this word occurs in the Psalms (chronologically), is at the end of Psalm civ., "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. 'Alleluia!'" *i.e.*, "Praise the Lord." Observe, it is in connection with the destruction of sinners that the word "Alleluia" is spoken, and it is in the same connection in this passage in Revelation. God will be glorified in the destruction of the wicked as in the salvation of the saints.

Verse 4.—"And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia." The Church too (represented by these elders and living creatures) worships God because of His righteous judgments. Compare Psalm lviii. 10, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance." It has been asked, is it possible that the righteous could ever calmly contemplate the everlasting destruction of the wicked, though in their own wickedness? Some think it impossible, and therefore proceed to deny the everlasting destruction—to explain away "the vengeance." Every such thought should be summarily checked; no word of Scripture may

be explained away because our natural feelings are not in sympathy with it. It is for us to accept faithfully and unreservedly all that God has written, and to wait until we know—and we shall know, even as we are known—for the solution of difficulties. Certainly, there can be no malice, no gratification of vengeful desire in this Alleluia of the Church. Certainly also, "we shall be like Him." There will be perfect agreement between Christ and His saints ; His feelings with regard to the destruction of the wicked will be their feelings. "They will have complete sympathy with His utter abhorrence of evil. There will be in their hearts a perfect harmony between the apparently contending interests of righteousness and grace, of justice and mercy. And so, when they see the eternal wrath of God poured out upon the ungodly, they will turn with intensified feelings towards the Throne of God and of the Lamb, and will prostrate themselves in unceasing adoration, as they echo the utterances of the angelic throng."*

Verse 6.—"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia ; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." The word translated, "reigneth," is not in the present tense in the original, it were perhaps better translated "reigned." But the idea is not that the reign was over ; it is that all through the dark preceding history with its mysterious dispensations towards the righteous, the Lord had reigned, and that this is now manifested. Let us remember this and lay it well to heart. God's providential dealings are often a great mystery. There are times when all

* R. B. Girdlestone. *Dies Iræ.*

seems to be left to stern relentless law, avenging every violation, smiting the transgressor to the ground, knowing no pity. Steady and sure the mighty wheels go round, and woe to him, whatever his character, who falls beneath them. So it seems to the natural eye, and men who know things only by the reports of sense, have forthwith asked the dread question, "Does God care?" And this has prompted the dreadful suspicion, "Is there any God to care?" And then has come the hard, fierce, defiant answer, "There is no God but a man's own wisdom and strength, and forethought, and superior ability," "A man's Providence is himself." We do not wonder at this, for sometimes God's own Spirit-taught people stagger for a while, and need to learn again the lesson of faith that behind all this seeming confusion is the Personal loving Father, ordering all things after the counsel of His own will, regulating and controlling everything, working out His plan : see Psalm lxxiii. "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Let us be patient—

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His works in vain ;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Let us be patient in the darkness and under the pressure of our own personal trials and troubles—

———— these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

Let us be patient, too, when in the world around us evil seems to be gaining ground and righteousness to be going under—

We see but dimly through the mists and vapours,
 Amid these earthly damps ;
 What seem to us but sad funereal tapers
 May be heaven's distant lamps.

"The Lord reigneth," is enough for to-day ;
 "The Lord is at hand," is enough for to-morrow.

But this song of the multitude is also by anticipation. Christ's position now, is like that of the nobleman in the parable who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. In this chapter we are on the very eve of the return, and it is in prospect of His reign that the multitude rejoice. It is also because of the marriage of the Lamb. And observe not only do they rejoice and sing praises, but they *give honour*. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him" (ver. 7). Yes ! not only is the Church saved, but saved to the glory of God, in its salvation. Christ thus prefaced His prayer—"I have glorified Thee on earth ; I have manifested Thy name," John xvii. 4-6. In the salvation of sinners every attribute of God is displayed as nowhere else. His righteousness, Rom. iii. 25 ; His grace, Eph. i. 6, ii. 7 ; His power, Eph. i. 19 ; His wisdom, Eph. iii. 10 ; His love, 1 John iv. 9. An old dying saint was asked, "What if after all, God should let you fall into hell ?" She replied, "*He would lose more by it than I should.*" The answer was bold, but most true.

Who are this multitude that give thanks and rejoice, because "the marriage of the Lamb is come"? It seems that in this and the preceding verses there are *two* companies mentioned. There is the Lamb's wife (the Church), and then there are those who say, "Let us be glad and rejoice." Who are these? The bride has her

companions at the marriage feast; there are guests also; they do not occupy the same position as she does, yet they sit at the table and partake of the feast. So, it seems as we have noticed, that there will be many who will be saved out of the great tribulation, and who will sit down as guests to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but who will not constitute the Church, the Lamb's wife. It may be then that the great multitude in ver. 6 is the same as the great multitude mentioned in chapter vii.; or rather, that the latter are part of and conspicuous among the former.

The figure of marriage (ver. 7) is frequently used in both Old and New Testaments for the union between Christ and the Church. See Ephesians v. 25-33. It is the perfect fruition of this union with all that it involves which is intended here—"The marriage of the Lamb is come." Let not the wonder of the figure prevent us from seeing the reality. Christ makes over to His Church all that He has, by making over Himself. She takes possession of His inheritance as His Bride.

Verse 8.—"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white [margin 'bright']: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The Revised Version translates: "the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." In the original, the plural is used—"the righteousnesses" of the saints. The expression refers to the habit of holiness, the sanctification wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, and now manifested in its lovely perfection. This is not their title to eternal life, that is the Righteousness of Christ, Philip. iii. 9. But it is their indispensable fitness of character.

And it begins here. If as life lengthens you are not growing like Christ ; if through the ever lessening years of time you are not in pursuit of His holiness, you are not on the way to the marriage supper. I John ii. 3, 4.

The expression "to her was granted" does not signify that now for the first time was she thus clothed upon. It is a form of speech used throughout the Revelation, and here announcing the fact that the Bride was thus presented perfect in holiness, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

It is said that when Christ shall appear *He* shall be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe (2 Thess. i. 10). The fine linen, the manifested holiness of the Bride, will call forth the praise and admiration of all heaven, but it will be praise of Him to whom it all is due, and admiration of Him who is reflected from her.

Verse 9.—"Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." This in its primary meaning seems to refer to those who will be *guests* at the marriage supper, as distinguished from the Bride. Still, we may use the text as a call to salvation ; and if it will be a blessed call to the guests then, how much more blessed is it to *us*, who are called *now!* They who now accept Christ's offer of salvation, shall then occupy a higher position than even that of these who are here said to be "blessed"; they shall sit next to Him at that supper, as "the Lamb's wife."

Observe here the seven benedictions of this Book :—

Blessed is he that readeth, &c., ch. i. 3.

Blessed are they that hear, &c., ch. i. 3.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, &c., ch. xiv. 13.

Blessed are they that are called, &c., ch. xix. 9.

Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection, ch. xx. 6.

Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy, &c., ch. xxii. 7.

Blessed are they that do His commandments, ch. xxii. 14.

We are emphatically assured that "These are the true sayings of God."

Verse 10.—"And I fell at his feet to worship him, and he said unto me, See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Who is the speaker? Probably the angel of ch. xvii. 1. He speaks here of himself and St. John as servants of their one Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and of their both bearing one testimony—the testimony of Jesus; of himself, in showing the apostle the things revealed, and of the latter, in writing them down.

Verse 11.—THE SECOND ADVENT itself. Christ comes to the earth, not now as the Friend of the sinner, but as the Judge.

"Behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True." The long-deferred promise of His coming has never been forgotten (2 Peter iii. 4, 9). The time is now come for its accomplishment; and every desire and hope which it has occasioned shall have satisfaction to the full.

The righteousness in which He judges and makes war, refers no doubt chiefly to the justice of the immediately coming judgment upon His foes, but may be understood also of all His

dispensations now which are often as if justice were asleep.

His eyes like a flame of fire. Compare ch. i. 14-16. Heb. iv. 13.

The many crowns or diadems proclaim Him King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes. Compare Philip. ii. 10.

We cannot conjecture what the unknown name may be; St. John saw it, but did not understand it. In ch. iii. 12, the Lord promises "My new name." We must wait for the fulfilment of the promise before we can understand it. Meanwhile, our very ignorance should remind us of the fountain fulness that dwells in Him for us. We can *never* know His name in the sense of exhausting it. The riches of His grace are unsearchable. Moreover, Christ knows our names, He knows us one by one, He knows us through and through, and all that concerns us. Every heart and every need is well known to Him.

Verse 13.—The blood here is not the blood of redemption. It is a token of the work of vengeance for which He comes. See Isaiah lxiii. 1-3.

Verse 14.—The fine linen identifies the armies with the saints (ver. 8). The angels doubtless are there, for He shall come in His glory, all His holy angels with Him (Matt. xxv. 31; 2 Thess. i. 7-8). But here, as elsewhere, prominence is given to His redeemed saints of all ages, who, when He shall appear are to appear with Him in glory.—See chap. xvii. 14; Jude 14; Zech. xiv. 5.

Verse 15.—It is noticeable that the sharp sword of which we have read before in ch. i. 16

is not now as then, called two-edged. It is now to be used for one purpose only. The word in Christ's mouth is no longer the word of the Saviour, inviting the sinner, it is the word of the Judge, condemning the impenitent wicked who refused His salvation. Observe, that as it is by His word now that He quickens and saves, so it will be by His word then that He will overthrow and destroy. The combination of His foes against whom he comes forth, is all that is possible; the full power of fallen man backed by the full energy of Satan: but Christ's word is enough for their immediate and utter destruction. We remember how the band which came to take him in the garden fell to the ground at his simple word. It was an earnest of the overthrow in the visions before us. Compare 2 Thess. ii. 8; Isaiah xi. 4.

This 15th verse explains ch. i. 7, "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Again compare Isaiah lxiii. 1-3.

DESTRUCTION OF THE BEAST, THE FALSE PROPHET AND THEIR FOLLOWERS (vers. 17-21). An angel is seen "standing in the sun," perhaps as the place of glory, becoming the proclamation of victory, perhaps as in the central spot in mid-heaven.

The great battle here described is that before mentioned in chapter xvi. 12-16. It seems to be identical with the scene in Ezekiel xxxix. 17, and the battle before the walls of Jerusalem in Zech. xiv. 1, &c. The latter passage in particular should be closely compared with this in the Revelation. The two together greatly help and enlighten each other. They are both to be literally understood. Neither the prophecy there nor the vision here merely represents theulti-

mate overthrow of all Antichristian principles. These principles find their culminating embodiment in literal persons and events. The whole analogy of prophecy leads to the conclusion that this scene of victory will be as literal as was the scene on Calvary. We must indeed beware of a bondage to literalism. These prophecies and visions have for the most part, a spiritual meaning, and speak of principles which are repeatedly appearing in history. But each prophecy and each vision has further its own distinct and particular intention, and in some person or event is to have its own literal accomplishment.

The refusal to see this is very dangerous ; it may lead to a haziness of view and indistinctness of statement with regard to the reality of the facts of the past—the literal personal manifestation of God the Son in human flesh ; His literal personal substitution of Himself for us, and interference on our behalf ; His literal wounding for our transgression. The scene on Calvary was not a mere temporary obscuring and seeming defeat of good principles ; it was the real death of the personal Son of God, and all its surroundings were literal—according to the prophecies going before. The fulfilment of this 19th chapter will be not only a final triumph of Christian principles, but a literal victory of the personally present Son of God.

Verse 20 identifies “the False Prophet” with the second beast of chap. xiii. Observe that as yet, only the two great leaders are cast into the lake of fire. The others are slain ; but reserved as to their eternal portion, for the last judgment —chap. xx. 12-15.

It is a deeply interesting announcement by

Zechariah, that the place which the returning Lord's feet will first touch will be the very place which they last touched. His feet shall stand on that day on the Mount of Olives, Zech. xiv. 4.

Historical interpreters confine this vision of slaughter to the ultimate and tremendous destruction of the Papal Antichrist, the Papal priesthood and kings adhering to him, together with Rome, the actual City.

THE MILLENNIUM.

Chapter XX. 1-7.

WE come now to the beginning of a new dispensation altogether ; Christ's visible kingdom upon earth. It begins with the binding of Satan.

Verse 1.—“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.” We must consider this as figurative language ; Satan is a spirit, the words therefore cannot mean literal binding. But they are not without a reality ; they are clearly intended to impress us with the truth of a complete restraint of Satan. He has never been *bound* yet. There has been since the day of Pentecost a *limiting* of his power ; yet he is still “the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience” and “the god of this world.” After the coming of Christ to the air for His people, Satan, knowing that his time is short, will have greater fury than ever, and be allowed more power than ever, culminating in the visible embodiment of worldly power, the Antichrist—the mock Christ—who will be dwelt in by the Evil spirit, as man has never yet been. But

when Christ comes to the *earth*, that power will be entirely restrained. Satan will not in any way be allowed to tempt man ; there will be a complete cessation of his influence, for a period of a thousand years. There are different opinions as to whether the thousand years are to be taken literally or not. All that we can say confidently about these periods of time is, that God intends us to understand that there is for everything a definite time appointed by Himself ; and whether it be persecution, tribulation, or the millennium, it will not last a day longer or a day less than God intends.

“The bottomless pit.”—Very probably, this is the same as the “lake of fire,” into which the beast and the false prophet are cast (chapter xix. 20), and which we find mentioned also in the last verse of this 20th chapter. The description just means a place the bottom of which can never be reached ; what is thrown in is always falling, deeper and deeper, and yet never reaching the bottom. We dare not let thought go free about it, but a fearful idea is suggested—that as there is progress in the divine life, and as we believe that there will be degrees in glory ; so, in contrast, there may be for those who are lost, a continual sinking deeper and deeper into misery, a never reaching the end.

Verses 4-7.—THE MILLENNIAL REIGN. St. John says that “he saw thrones, and they sat upon them.” Who sat upon them? The answer is not to be confined to the latter part of the verse, as if the occupants of the thrones were only the martyrs, and those who had refused to worship the beast. They are the apostles and the Church generally. The elders of chapters iv. and v. “The giving of judgment to them,” does not

mean merely that justice was done to them, but that the act and decision of judgment was given to them—as for example to the judges of old. See Matt. xix. 28, 1 Cor. vi. 2-3, Dan. vii. 21-28. Then, St. John saw another special company, “the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, &c.” These are the martyrs of the great tribulation ; they are not amongst the elders, but are expressly named to prevent any thought of their being left out of Millennial blessedness ; just as the special assurance was given in chap. xiv. 13, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth.*” Now, let us carefully observe what follows : “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” It has been suggested that the resurrection thus spoken of is not literal but figurative—that it means a gradually established supremacy of Christianity over the world ; and a living again of the saints of past ages in the world’s tardy recognition of them, and submission to the principles in which they lived and died, and for which many of them have been put to death. Thus the apostles reign, and the early Christian martyrs reign, and Wycliffe and Luther and Cranmer reign, in Christianity as it is to-day. There *is* such a reign. The faithful of all the past centuries do verily, thus reign with Christ. There is an approximate fulfilment of the vision in the fact that Christianity has dethroned Paganism, and that Christian thought and Christian principles, for which holy men of old laid down their lives, are powers of influence over the whole civilized world.

But the passage has a further and another meaning altogether ; the plain and literal meaning in which it was understood by those who lived nearest to the apostles, and by the whole Church for at least the first 300 years. Let us look at the words again—St. John saw the *souls*, &c. This language has been pointed to as of necessity excluding a resurrection of the body—in the case, at least, of the martyrs. But observe, he adds, “And they *lived* and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished.” In the latter sentence it seems certain that the “living” of the dead cannot possibly mean their living in the minds of men in the influence of their principles ; it can only mean the resurrection of their bodies ; they lived not, they came not out of their graves, until after the thousand years, when we hear of them again in verses 12-13. It follows that the first “they lived,” must also be understood to mean literal resurrection. Dean Alford says most truly, “If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain souls ‘lived’ at the first, and the rest of the dead lived only at the end of a specified period after the first—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave, then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to any thing.” We can see a reason for the introduction of the resurrection of the martyrs here. The Church has already been raised and glorified, chaps. iv. and v. These martyrs have died in the meanwhile, after Christ’s coming to the air, and before He comes to the

earth to reign. Are they to have no share in the Millennial kingdom? Are they not to be glorified together with Christ, who thus suffered for Him? There is room for the question. But all question and doubt is removed by the special introduction into the vision of the souls of them that were beheaded, &c.—*They* lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

The distinction between a first resurrection and a second, here expressly declared, is intimated in various other Scriptures. Compare the statement of “first resurrection” with the Lord’s answer to the Sadducees, Luke xx. 34-36. He speaks of a resurrection which is only for those who shall be “counted worthy” to obtain it, and who are termed the children of the resurrection. Surely, this makes it plain that there is a resurrection of the saints, which is distinct from that of others. Read also the discourse in John vi., and observe how frequently Christ speaks of the “being raised again at the last day” as a distinct privilege reserved for His own people, to whom He will give it. Again, let St. Paul’s words in Philippians iii. 11 be considered. It seems strange that St. Paul should make a share in the resurrection of the dead the object of his great desire, since “all that are in the graves shall hear Christ’s voice and come forth.” But the apostle’s meaning is plain in the true rendering of the passage, which is “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection *from among* the dead.” It was a share in the first resurrection that the apostle desired. The same form of words is used by the Lord in the passage already quoted (Luke x. 35), “resurrection *from* the dead.”

See also Rom. viii. 11. Here is a condition

mentioned. He shall quicken your mortal bodies *if* now His Spirit dwelleth in you. Again, 1 Cor. xv. 23, "*They that are Christ's, at his coming*" are to be raised. Again, 1 Thess. iv. 16, "*The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive, &c.*"; the distinction being, not between the dead in Christ and the dead not in Christ, but between the dead in Christ and the living in Christ. Both passages refer exclusively to the resurrection of the Lord's people—"the first resurrection." Nor is there any contradiction between these passages and others which may seem at first, to speak of one general resurrection. We have only to remember again that prophecy sometimes puts together two events as if they were connected very closely, or even simultaneous, when in truth there is to be a long interval between them. One of the most striking examples is in Isaiah lxi. 2, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." So, when Christ declares "All that are in the grave shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation," John v. 28-29; or, when Daniel is told "that many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2), the language plainly, does not require a simultaneous resurrection of the good and the evil; there may be a long interval between the two events, and it seems certain that there will be.

Verse 6.—Blessed and *holy* is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be

priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him for ever." Compare chap. i. 6. In what way this twofold endowment shall be exercised we are not told. But every true member of Christ has already his part in a regal priesthood—not only now, to offer up spiritual sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and consecrated life; and not only to reign by the power of personal Christian influence; but also hereafter, in some literal sense, to sit with Christ in His throne (chap. iii. 21), and to be His priest in the future dispensation; it may be, an agent of communication between Him and the nations of them that shall people the Millennial world. Yet, not for the Millennium only, and it may be, not for this world only. After a sort infinitely beyond our present comprehension, "They shall reign for ever and ever," ch. xxii. 5; and the everlasting union between Christ and His Church—a union so close that no earthly union can adequately represent it—surely requires that wherever He shall be as the Saviour King of the boundless universe, there shall also the Bride be. "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

The "second death" is presently defined; the expression is found only in the Book of Revelation, and occurs four times—chs. ii. 11, xx. 6 and 14, xxi. 8, where see notes.

The Millennium itself, the state of things on the earth during the thousand years, is not described in the chapter before us; but elsewhere, in the Old Testament in particular, there are many references to it—(1.) There will be the personal visible presence of the King in His beauty—Isaiah xxxiii. 17; 1 John iii. 2. (2.) There will be the priesthood and the reign

with Christ, here and elsewhere promised. (3.) There will be an entire cessation from the temptations of Satan, and an entire absence of at least any outward manifestations of evil. (4.) There will be universal peace and righteousness.—Isaiah xxxii. 1. (5.) There will be the full restitution to their own land of the Jewish people, and their national conversion to Christ their Messiah. They will be the great missionaries of that dispensation, through whom the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Jerusalem will be the world's metropolis, and the centre of its light and blessing.—Isaiah xi. 10, lx., lxvi. 19, 20; Jer. xxxi. ; Ezek. xxxvii. ; Zech. xiv. 9; Rom. xi. 12, &c. (6.) Once more, there shall be a repeal of the curse brought upon creation by sin.—Isaiah xi., xxxv., lxv. 17, &c. ; Rom. viii. 21.

“O, scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplished bliss ; which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy ?”

EVENTIDE AND LIGHT.

Chapter XX. 7-10.

THESE verses tell us of the last conflict between good and evil. At the end of the thousand years Satan is loosed and permitted again to go out and deceive the nations. This is very remarkable, and teaches that all will not be on Christ's side inwardly who submit outwardly, and that *external privileges* do not convert a man. It is as if God were trying man again. He tried him in the Garden of Eden, and he fell; He tried him in the patriarchal age ; under the law ; under the gospel ; in "the tribulation"; and he fell. Now, again God tries him at the close of the millennium ; and, strange as it seems, even when all its privileges are still around them, no sooner is Satan allowed his old power than the nations are deceived, and form a confederacy against God and His Christ.

Some have supposed that this final outburst of evil must have been preceded by a great decay of true religion ; this, however, does not appear. But it seems certain that even during the millennium there will be unconverted multitudes. There will be sin. It will be suppressed

and restrained, and dormant perhaps, because unsolicited of Satan ; but sin will be ; and so soon as the restraint is removed and the temptation presented, sin will rise again, in all its enmity against God. Surely, in view of this awful revelation, the question should solemnly be considered by every professing Christian, Am I truly a converted man ? Am I truly God's child, born of the Spirit ? How would it be with me if all the restraints of circumstances were removed ? Is my Christianity Christ Himself and union with Him, or a mere living in a circle of Christian privileges ? There is no man who may not very soon fall into the deepest apostacy whose religion is but in name.

It is very difficult to say who or what Gog and Magog represent. Read the prophecies against them in Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix. Perhaps, they signify the inhabitants of some particular region, but probably the names are figurative, and indicate gigantic force and power. The magnitude of the confederation is shown in the words, "Satan shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the *four quarters of the earth*, Gog and Magog." We notice that again the scene of this battle is laid at Jerusalem (verse 9), "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the *beloved city*."

This last demonstration of sin is speedily quelled. "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them ;" and Satan is for ever consigned to the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet are.

We pass on to the closing scene of time—

Verses 11-13.—THE LAST ASSIZE.—"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat

on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." In this and following verses we have the general judgment. We have now come to the evening of the Day of the Lord; and at evening time it shall be *light* (Zech. xiv. 7), the light of the great white throne, bringing in the light of eternity. The words "the earth and the heaven fled away" seem at first to indicate annihilation, but we shall presently see that this is not so to be.

Verses 12-14.—"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works.*" Notice the expression, "judged according to their works." The judgment is nearly always spoken of as a judgment of *works*; for instance, see Romans ii. 6—"God will render to every man according to his deeds"; and 2 Cor. v. 10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, *according to that he hath done*, whether it be good or bad." But if this is the case, how do we reconcile these texts with such words as "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth not shall be damned?" The answer is, the tree will be known by its fruits. "The works," as God sees them, are the index of the truth of every man's inner life, the evidences of the real man, whether a true believer in Christ or not. We can but poorly estimate them, but the Judge makes no mistake who seven times in the

Epistles to the Churches declares "I know thy works." See ch. ii. 2, and note.

Let us look at this last judgment scene a little more particularly.

It seems that before that great white throne will stand in that day all the sons and daughters of men ; not one will be missing, from Adam down to the last child born. But we need not suppose that all will stand there to be *judged*, in the sense of being tried. God's own Church surely will not be standing there thus to be judged. Christ has declared most plainly, "He that heareth My words, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." John v. 24. The word "condemnation" should be "*judgment*," as it is in the Revised Version : "He that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment." The people of God will have been judged long before the setting up of the great white throne. They will have been judged as Jesus Christ Himself was judged. He came to this earth and said He was the Son of God, but the world refused Him ; it called Him an impostor : that was the verdict of the world. How then was it known that He was not an impostor but the Son of God ? By the resurrection. Christ's rising from the dead on the third day proved that the world was wrong. "He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead." And so, Christ's people will not be put upon their trial, but declared to be the sons of God, by the resurrection. The first thing as we have repeatedly seen, which the Lord will do when He rises to return, will be to call up His saints to meet Him ; "The

dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them." (I Thess. iv. 16.)

They are not now, therefore, before the great white throne to be judged, but to be manifested, and then to take their places as assessors with Christ, in His great assize. The Book of Life is opened. From every page of it the name of some believer shines forth, written in the golden character of God's eternal love. And underneath, as keeping to the figure, we may suppose—for "their works do follow them"—the story of "the work of faith, and patience of hope, and labour of love" now receiving, and now to receive to the full, its *just recompence* of God's *free grace*. Just; for the reward of each will be according to the measure and quality of good work which he has wrought. And yet, all of God's free grace; for while our sin is all our own, our good is all of God, and mingled with much of our sin; and though it were never so perfect, yet it is due already, and can merit nothing; and could it merit, yet would it fall infinitely short of the exceeding and eternal weight of the glory of the least portion and lowest place in the inheritance of the saints in light.

It does not appear whether the holy who die during the Millennium await this judgment scene to receive their resurrection bodies. Perhaps the opening of the book of life may have special reference to them, and to those living on the earth at the last outbreak of evil, and who refuse to join it.

But, God must be glorified in the sentence upon each of the lost also. Therefore, "The books were opened, and the dead were judged

out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." These dead are the dead who have died out of Christ, and in their sins :—the rest of the dead of ch. xx. 5, and probably the unbelieving dead of the millennium, and of the just before recorded fiery vengeance of God. They *live* now and come forth to "the resurrection of damnation," John v. 29, to be judged out of the things written in the books, that each may receive his own place and portion in the second death.

The Books are opened. We need not think of literal books, but from such a representation we may know most assuredly, that nothing shall then escape notice or be misunderstood. All things, down to the very least, will be manifested beyond all doubt and dispute ; the final judgment will be so accurate and particular and personal, and so just and righteous, as if literally, an exact register had been made of everything.

The Book of God's Remembrance will be opened, in which is engraved day by day, every minutest and most secret thing, every thought and feeling and imagination and desire and word and work and circumstance of the entire life's history.

The Book of God's Providence will be opened, showing that God dealt with them in all possible ways of mercies and of judgments, warning and threatening, alluring and promising, smiting and smiling, to bring them back to Himself by Christ.

And the Book of Scripture will be opened—opened at the *Law*, for evidence of transgression, and to prove that God plainly told men the requirements of His righteousness, and

their own utter and miserable insufficiency—opened at the *Gospel*, for evidence of the full and free salvation which His love provided, and they despised or neglected.

And lastly, the Book of Conscience will be opened, to force from each of them his full assent to the justice of his sentence. This will, perhaps, be the most terrific record of all. Better even now, to have earth's worst torments than an accusing conscience. And if conscience does not always speak, conscience keeps a diary most minute and most exact; and if the writing is often blurred and blotted, God in that day, will refresh and recover every letter of it; and if the writing is sometimes made, as it were, with invisible ink, it will all stand out legible enough, and every sin will stare the sinner in the face as he draws near to that fire which never shall be quenched.

We know not the details of the judgment which follows. We only know that when sentence is given, there shall not be one who will not know and feel that the Judge of all the earth has done him right.

Observe the strict justice of the judgment. An unconverted man often says or thinks, "If not saved, it matters not how I live." But that is a great mistake. There will be degrees in this "second death": as they have deserved, so they will receive their portion; some will be beaten with *many* stripes, and some with *few*. True it is, indeed, that the unconverted are lost, not because they have been bad (as the others are not saved because they are good), but because they have refused Jesus Christ's offer of salvation. Nevertheless, the final sentence will not be arbitrary; it will proceed upon

the record which moment by moment is being made of their deeds ; in strictest justice shall they be judged according to their works.

Verse 13.—“ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.” The word “hell” means the place of departed spirits. We find in the next verse, that death and hell were destroyed. There will be no more use for “hell”; death will be abolished, and no place of departed spirits will henceforth be needed.

And now with bated breath let us hear again the solemn and awful conclusion—“ Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire ” (verse 15).

Three times over within the compass of two short verses we are told of that awful reality “the lake of fire”—the terrible doom of the lost—“the second death.” Bodily death, the separation of the spirit from the body, is an awful thing ; more awful still is the spiritual death in which lies every unconverted man, the separation of his spirit from God. But how awful is this second death, the eternal separation of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, from God, in the lake of fire !

We can have but little idea of its meaning, but God save us from taking refuge from the awfulness of the thought in the falsehood of annihilation, or in the equal falsehood of universal restoration. The only conclusion from the teaching of *Scripture* which is not practically an attempt to explain away the plainest language, is that the second death means conscious personal existence for ever ; and conscious personal endurance of whatever those terrible figures may signify, everlastingingly. *There is a*

second death, there is an eternally abiding wrath of God, there is a fire that shall never cease to burn and a worm that shall never cease to gnaw. That we might never experience it Jesus Christ, the Lord of love, Himself has revealed it.

How unspeakably important, then, the question, "Is my name in the Book of Life?" Nothing in all the strange conduct of men is so strange as the continual postponement of the decision of that question. "What a gambling spirit," it has been well said, "must there be in us by nature, that we should be able to go out and to come in, to rise up and lie down, to work and to rest, to transact business and to enjoy society, day by day and night by night, and yet never know whether, if death came to us, as come he may at any moment, we should awake up in heaven or in hell!" The question is plainly answered in Scripture. This is the record that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." We cannot climb up into heaven, and there by searching find out about ourselves. But the word of God is nigh us; and here God plainly tells us, that every sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ *hath* his name in the heavenly volume.

In one of the wards of a hospital, a poor lad, who had found the Saviour in a ragged school, was dying. His father said to himself, as he bade his boy farewell, "I fear that I shall not see him again." The words were heard by a sick man in the next bed, who thought that the boy also must have heard them, and was surprised at his calmness. Presently he asked,

"Did you hear what your father said when he went away?" The boy replied that he had heard. "Did you understand him?" "Yes," was the answer, "my father thinks that I shall probably die to-night." "And are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no; I am not at all afraid." The man turned round with a sigh, and exclaimed, "Oh, God, that I were not afraid to die!" Then, raising himself a little, and looking earnestly at his companion, the dying lad said—and they were almost his last words—"It's very simple; it's saying 'Yes' to the Lord Jesus." Never were truer words spoken. There is no man on this side of the grave to whom the salvation of Christ is not extended. Whosoever will, may have eternal life as God's free gift through Jesus Christ.

But "how shall we escape if we neglect—not only if we reject—so great salvation?" No man can answer that question; no angel can answer it; God Himself cannot answer it, for God hath cut off all escape—"he that believeth not shall be damned."

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

Chapter XXI., XXII. 5.

THE visions now relate to eternity. By the figure of a city such as no eye has ever seen, is described the everlasting bliss and glory of the Church of Christ. Whether there will be any actual city, literally fulfilling the wonderful description of the new Jerusalem, to be the Church's dwelling place on the new earth, we cannot know; but this may be said, the language at times seems to require it. And why should this not be so? Once more let us remind ourselves how exactly and literally were fulfilled all the prophecies of the Cross and the humiliation. If we be charged with being of narrow mind, and unable to discern between figure and fact, because we think (I trust, with all reverential humility, and readiness to admit that we may be wrong) that there may be a literal meaning to these visions of future glory, we have at least a good and solid ground to stand upon for our defence, in the literal accomplishment of prophecies already fulfilled. The Child-bearing Virgin, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the proclamation "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," the piercing and the vinegar, the numbering with the transgressors, the grave with the rich, the third day,

and every other item of Old Testament prediction of the sufferings of Christ were fulfilled to the letter.

We need never be ashamed because we think that predictions of "the glory that shall follow" will be literally fulfilled also. That much of the language may be figurative must be allowed; but that the figures are predictions to be fulfilled in literal realities we have good Scripture warrant for believing. The paradise of the new earth will be as material as was the paradise of the old.

St. John tells us that he saw "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." This does not point to the annihilation of the old. There are two Greek words translated "new," the one signifying new in the sense of not having existed before, the other new as being *re-newed*, *re-freshed*. The Greek word used here, means that the earth and heaven had existed before, but had been *re-newed*; not that they were new in the sense of not having existed before. Like as there will be a resurrection of the body, so there will be a resurrection of the earth. St. Paul assures us that "*this* corruptible must put on incorruption, and *this* mortal must put on immortality." The same body that is buried shall be raised again—the very truth of a resurrection requires this—but oh! how changed. And so with the soul, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," but identity remains. Thus will the earth be *re-newed*. We read in 2 Peter iii. that "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also and the works that are there-

in shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." But in verse 6 the apostle speaks of the world's perishing by water. This was not its annihilation, but its change and purification. So, the heavens and the earth which are now, shall endure their "perishing" by fire, and come forth renewed and purified from every taint and mark of sin. When will this great dissolution which St. Peter foretells, take place? Will it be before or after the Millennium? The vision does not tell us; but it seems probable that it will be when the great white throne is set up; and that it is of this renewal by fire that St. John writes, "The earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."

And thus, perhaps, is accounted for the remarkable change on the earth's surface unexpectedly introduced—"And there was no more sea." Would not this be one of the natural consequences of such a conflagration? It may well be that the now necessary yet destructive partitions between nation and nation will be removed.

The language, however, may be understood figuratively of the sea, as a type of the great seething mass of mankind, as it is now driven and tossed with storms of passion and prejudice. We have seen the beast rising out of this sea. Even since the glory of the Millennium this sea has been raging; but now, in the dawn of eternity, it ceases *for ever*; there will be no more sea.

Verse 2.—"And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." Will this be literally fulfilled? It

need not be so ; the city may "come down," as every good gift and every perfect gift comes down, from above. But the words indicate a special "preparation"; compare Hebrews xi. 10, he looked for "a city which hath foundations, whose *builder and maker is God.*"

Verse 3.—"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.'" This is true *now*; the tabernacle of God is with men; God dwells *in* and *with* every Christian. St. Paul writes, "Ye *are* the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people"; see also 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 2 Cor. vi. 16. Yet St. Peter writes of "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter i. 7-9. He means that we shall then receive salvation in all its perfection; the salvation of eternity is only the perfected salvation of time. And what is this salvation? It is salvation back to God. The grand charge that God brings against man is godlessness. Man has gone away from God, as the prodigal son left his father. The redemption which is in Jesus Christ is redemption back to God; not to the Bible only, or to church, or to ordinances, but to God. So God has said, "I will be your God," and if we have God for our God, everything else will follow. The vision here is the perfection. Notice the words "*God Himself* shall be with them." Here is a depth which we cannot fathom. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 24-28: the language is hard to be understood, but it seems to fit in with the verse

we are now considering. All our knowledge of God now, is through the Mediator, we see God only through Christ: but it would seem as if Christ's mediation will be no longer needed when "He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." And may it not be that then we shall have a fuller vision of God, a nearer approach to God than now is possible? When everything is perfect, "then" (to use St. Paul's words) "shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." These are strange words, and we cannot venture to say what they mean—"the Son also Himself being subject unto Him,"—but so it will be "at the end."

Verse 4.—"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." It is a very touching verse. The heavenly Jerusalem is described, not so much by what *it is*, as by what *it is not*. It reminds us that, after all, the present heritage which has come to a sinful world, is but a heritage of woe.

Moreover, in the state of things during the millennium, which will include both sin and death, and therefore, doubtless, sorrow and pain (Is. lxv. 20); and in the inability of our present powers to apprehend any positive description of the eternal glory, is reason enough for the description by negations.

Verse 5.—"And he said unto me, write; for these words are true and faithful." What a condescension on God's part to tell us that all this is true! God, as it were, stops in the midst of the description of all these wonderful things

to tell us that it *is* for *us*; and that we are not to be staggered at the picture shown us. Why should God prepare such things for them that love Him? Because He desires to display Himself. Compare Eph. ii. 7, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." God's treasures of grace are shown in His taking a poor fallen sinner, and saving him, and being kind to him. Yes! and this kindness will go on for ever, for His grace is infinite. When we read these chapters and see what is the portion and the inheritance of those who are Christ's, do we not feel as St. John must have felt when he uttered that exclamation—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever"?

Observe again, how God says, "Write." He would have the vision recorded for practical use by His Church. It is vouchsafed as a counter-attraction against the allurements of the world that now is. God does not only say, "love not the world," but he presents a picture of an infinitely better world, and brings into play "the expulsive power of a new affection." With such a vision as this recorded for us shall we consent to barter our own share in the everlasting reality, for the empty vanities and false delights and damning sins of this world, whose fashion passeth away?

The announcement in verse 6 comes in somewhat abruptly. It may mean a reminder that He that sits upon the throne is He "by whom the old was and the new shall be, by whom the

old is fulfilled in the new : " and in whom all the eternally growing yearnings of the immortal spirit shall find their eternal and full satisfaction.

Verse 7.—Let us observe how we are again reminded of the character of the inheritor of this kingdom, that he is a faithful soldier, and by God's grace a victor in the fight. Compare the promises to the seven churches.

Verse 8.—Here are the excluded characters, and the remarkable thing is that the list is headed by "the fearful and the unbelieving." Not only the immoral are excluded, but they who are cowardly ashamed to confess Christ here, and are afraid of the loss and the cross by following Him ; they also who, whatever their moral conduct or their profession, have refused or neglected Him.

"The fearful and the unbelieving." Let every man who is refusing the cross, and every man who is resting in his moralities, mark how the list begins.

Verses 12 and 14.—The name of the twelve tribes on the gates, and of the twelve apostles on the stones of foundation, remind us of the twenty-four elders, representing the completed Church of both Old and New Testament believers ; the latter writing calls to mind Ephes. ii. 20.

Verse 16.—The enormous height of the city is thought by some to be decisive against any literal interpretation. It is not, however, at all necessary to suppose the actual city to be so high. The measurement may well include the hill or rock upon which the city is built, as stood Jerusalem of old above the valley of Kedron.

Verse 17 seems to mean either that the angel used the measure commonly used by men, or that in this matter men and angels use the same measure.

Verse 22.—Having described the city—and it is best to let the description just speak for itself—St. John adds: “I saw no temple therein”: external things are done away, as is the case now, with all belonging to the Jewish ritual: there will be no house of prayer, nor means of grace as now. In the first part of this chapter we noticed the words in verse 3, “God Himself shall be with them,” and that they seem to be a carrying out of 1 Cor. xv. 24. So here, “the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it”; there is a nearer and more direct approach to God than is possible under this dispensation. Yet, “the Lamb” is named. The memorial of Christ’s abundant kindness, of the oblation of Himself, to which all share in that city is due, will remain forever.

In verse 23 we are told, “the city had no *need* of the sun, neither of the moon;” not, that there was neither sun nor moon.

Verse 24 presents a difficulty. Who are the nations who “walk by the light of her,” and “the kings of the earth who bring glory in to her”? Certainly, they are not the inhabitants proper of the Holy City; not the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. We cannot assert, but there seems to be here another faint indication that there will be others saved who are not the Church of Christ, as there are those called to the wedding who are not the bride. See notes on ch. xii. It may be asked, does not this mystery of the new Jerusalem throw some little glimmer of light on the question of God’s dealings with the

heathen who have not heard of Him ? Yet, it is but a glimmer, and we dare not venture on any assertion.

Note in verse 27 the repeated statement of the exclusion of all sin ; and that the title to admission is entry in "the Lamb's book of life," and nothing else whatever.

Chap. xxii.—Again and again expressions in this book remind us of the spiritual things of the Gospel. In verse 1 we read, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." We cannot determine what this "pure river" is, but the verse reminds us of the Trinity—Water of life, a symbol of the *Holy Spirit*, proceeding out of the throne of *God* and of the *Lamb*. "He proceedeth from the Father and the Son." It is always thus that the Blessed Trinity is revealed to us; not in abstract dogmatic statements, but practically; not for the scholar but for the sinner. The three Persons are shown to us wonderfully working together for us and our Salvation. Compare Matt. xxviii. 19; Rom. viii. 2-4; Eph. ii. 18, &c.

Verse 2.—"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life," &c. The wonderful tree of life reappears here; we remember it in Genesis, in the Paradise lost; now it reappears in Paradise regained. Here it is spoken of as having leaves which would heal the nations. This is another mystery which we cannot fathom. Compare ch. xxi. 24. The words again seem to point to some saved by Christ, but outside of the company of His Church. What their "healing" will be it is impossible

even to conjecture ; but the fact stated at least reminds us of the blessings which Christianity now confers even upon those who are not Christian. Every charitable institution, every agency for even the temporal relief of the needy, every restraint of public opinion, every benefit of civilization is a leaf of the Tree of life.

But the tree is wonderfully fruitful—"it bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruits every month." Wherefore this twelve-fold fruit ? Surely in some way for the use of the citizens of that heavenly city. And if it be asked will this fruit be literally eaten by them, it may be answered, Christ says, "to him that overcometh will I give to eat." Ch. ii. 7. The gift may be the ministering to our glorified bodies of what will then and there be their own proper gratification ; something, of which we cannot now speak or know particularly, but which will be to them what knowledge is to the mind, and love to the affections. Why should this be thought an incredible thing ? True indeed, it is that, immortal, incorruptible, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, the glorified bodies of His saints will not need the sustentation of food, nor know the consequences of corruption as now. But they will be real bodies, and because real it seems as if there will be some gratification proper to them. May not this be the specific meaning of the promise "to give to eat of the Tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"? However, there is not one of us who may not one day know its meaning by the actual enjoyment. It is no special promise for a few only of the army of Christ. It is a promise to be enjoyed by every faithful soldier, however lowly his position

now, and we may be sure of this, that the thing intended, whatever it be, will infinitely transcend our highest expectations. Comp. Ezek. xlviij. 12 ; also Mark xiv. 25.

We may spiritualize the description : the Lord is the "Tree of Life;" and as this tree bore fruit every month, so there is no day, nor month, nor season when we cannot turn to Jesus Christ and find suitable mercy and grace to help in time of need. It is not the truth directly taught here, but we are reminded of it. Christ is always accessible, and you cannot turn to Him at any season of life, and not find in Him fruit convenient, sweet to your taste, the very nourishment that your soul requires.

Verse 3.—"And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Though this is the eternal state, and the time is described as a time when God is in a peculiar manner with His people, yet the throne is described as "the throne of God and of the Lamb." The Lamb is still adored as the One through whom all the glory came.

Let us, as we draw near to the close of the book, reflect upon this often repeated description of our Lord, and its meaning, of infinite importance to every one of us.

God has provided Himself the Lamb. The Lord Jesus Christ is set forth by God Himself "to be a propitiation, through faith in His Blood." For this He came, for this He was incarnate, for this He died ; by this one oblation of Himself once offered, to make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

And now "we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus." But no man

shall ever be allowed to come near to God, shall ever have the pardon of his sins and peace with God, in any other way. Some ignore it, some repudiate it, some neglect it, some never seem to have heard of it, some cry out against it ; but the fact remains beyond all denial that Redemption by the Blood of the Lamb is the great theme of the Scriptures from end to end. God is constantly bringing it before us, and uses every possible force and variety of language to impress it deeply upon the heart, that the Blood of Christ's atonement is the alone passport into His favour. Man is not his own Saviour ; Christ is the alone and altogether Saviour. But it is Christ by His Blood, Christ sacrificed, Christ dying for us, Christ wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities unto the death. If your Saviour be not the Christ of Scripture you have *none*, and you will never be saved; and your Christ is not the Christ of Scripture if He be not a slain Christ. I mean not only a Christ who was put to death, which of course you believe, but a Christ who came to die, who was born of the Virgin Mary that He might be crucified under Pontius Pilate; a Christ whose Cross and Passion, as that of your substitute and your sin-bearer, is the obtaining of salvation to you. There is a remarkable plant called the Gory Dew, which is sometimes found in grass land.* In appearance it is like a number of little spots lying close together upon the ground. While the earth is dry it is almost invisible at a short distance, but when the rain has fallen the colour is brought out, and the traveller may behold, to his astonishment, the whole meadow

* From "Parables of Plant Life," by Rev. J. Neil.

made red all over, and waving about in the wind, like a sea of blood. Even so, till the spiritual rain has fallen, men fail to discern the Saviour's sufferings and the Saviour's bleeding love as the great theme of all the Bible. But when once the Holy Spirit has come down, and has Himself taken of the things of Christ, and shown them unto us, then the Atonement is seen everywhere, and the field of revelation presents itself in length and breadth, dyed in the redeeming Blood, the precious Blood of Christ. Then, what is this Blood to you? What is your relation to it? If you are not under it every sin you have ever committed lies at this moment in all its enormity, open and bare to the sword of divine justice. You are an unpardoned sinner, and the wrath of God abideth on you. But if you are under the Blood, there is not one condemnation to you, not a sin that is not forgiven. Again, what is the Blood of Christ to you? If it be not your trust, your confidence, your plea, then, surely, all your endeavours to please God by following Christ's example are nothing worth. The Blood of Christ is the great secret of holiness as well as pardon. Never was greater mistake than that of those who think pardon through the Blood means carelessness about sin or indifference towards holiness. It means self-consecration to Him who bought us by His Blood; it means that of necessity. The man who knows Christ's Blood-bought pardon for his own sin, is a man who is at least beginning to say "Oh! that I may live unto Him who loved me and gave Himself for me."

"They talk of morals;—O Thou bleeding Lamb,
The true morality is love of Thee."

Verse 3.—“His servants shall serve Him.” There will be service in eternity ; we know not its kind, but the present time is a preparation for that eternal service. Some say that this short life is insignificant, compared with eternity. It might be so if there were no connection between the two lives ; but God joins them. There is a continuity of service. Indeed, we know not what we shall be nor what we shall have to do. And this should keep us quiet in strange dispensations. This life is a preparation for future service ; and surely if we do not know the nature of that service, we need not expect to understand the preparation.

Verse 4.—“And they shall see His face.” This is evidently some closer revelation, a nearer approach to God, than is now possible. “And His name shall be in their foreheads.” The figure is of some of the nearest followers of a great king being allowed to see him and consult with him, and receive badges or signs of that king’s favour ; and then going forth to execute his commands. The reality will be something of the same kind. His servants will be His privy councillors, and as earthly kings give special marks of favour, so in eternity, God’s servants will have something to correspond to those royal favours. See chapter iii. 12, and note there.

CONCLUSION.

Chapter XXII. 6-21.

OBSERVE how in these concluding sayings and exhortations the Lord insists upon the *character* of those who shall have a right to the tree of life. It is a common accusation brought by unbelievers against the Christian religion, that because we are saved, not by our own merits, but by Christ's, therefore it does not signify how we live, or what character we bear. This is either utter ignorance of Holy Scripture, or wilful misrepresentation thereof. Read the clear statements of St. Paul in Rom. vi. in answer to the question, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God justifies the ungodly; but He does not justify *sin*; nor does He justify the ungodly that he may remain so. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure."

Verses 6, 7.—Another assertion of the entire faithfulness of the Book, and a repetition of the promise of blessing in chapter i. 4 with an emphasis upon "the keeping" in harmony with

the prominence given in these concluding verses to the righteousness of the citizens of the new Jerusalem. Compare John xiv. 15, viii. 51. Again, the great event of the Revelation is declared in the formula, "Behold I come quickly."

Verses 8-10.—See chapter xix. 10.

Verse 10.—The apostle was not to seal up the sayings of this book, as if the events recorded were so far distant that the Church had no need to know about them. No ! the Church is to read them now, to prepare herself for the second coming of her Lord, always spoken of in Scripture as near—near to the eye of faith which can overlook the little while, little indeed when compared with eternity.

Verse 11.—He that is unjust, &c. This is by some understood to mean the time is short, change while yet you may; behold, Christ comes, soon no change of character will be possible. But the words leave no time for change at all ; they fix the character for ever. And they seem to be pointing to the solemn fact that the character which now, by his continued actions, every man is daily acquiring will be his character in eternity. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This is God's law, and it greatly helps us to acquiesce in the revelation of the eternal portions. The character which shall be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ will be the outcome and growth of the doings of this present lifetime. You may think that each single thought which you cherish and each single thing which you do is of slight importance ; but it is by these daily thoughts and doings, and not by a few extraordinary

deeds on great occasions, that the character assumes the shape it is to wear for ever,—just as the harvest is the manifold reproduction of each tiny grain of seed. And this character will be our misery or our happiness eternally. Hell will not be mere intensified bodily pain. We have reason indeed to believe that the infliction of pain from without will be part of the punishment there ; else wherefore did the Lord of love himself tell us of a fire that never shall cease to burn, and of one tormented in that flame? But the chiefest misery of that miserable place will be in the character which the lost shall have acquired. "Myself am Hell," will be the fearful confession of others than Satan. Let the man who has lived to gratify and to strengthen the appetites and passions of a depraved nature, find himself where his passions in their full strength, shall ever demand a gratification which never more shall be enjoyed ; or, the man whose life has been a life spent without God in the world, let him wake up to find how dark and dreary and hungry and thirsty the soul will be that, created by God, and for God, has neglected and refused God, and must now be without God for ever—and each of these will find in the fruit of his own doings the very elements of hell within his own bosom.

And so, Heaven will not be merely intensified earthly enjoyment. We believe that there shall be joys, the very joys of earth sanctified and purified from all pollution. We look forward to freedom from all pain and sorrow and weariness and care ; we anticipate the society of the great and the good ; we comfort ourselves with the words which tell us of the restoration

of lost friendships, and the reunion of severed love ; we know and are sure that there will be found material elements of happiness in the world to come. But the portion of the Christian emphatically, is to be found in more than even all these glad things, for " We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." To see, to love, to know, to serve, to enjoy, to be with God in Christ, for ever, in the perfection of that Christ-like character which His grace is gradually forming in every true believer,—this will be emphatically the portion of the saved. " Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap."

Verse 12.—" Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

This is a solemn reminder for the people of God. They are left here in the world for a purpose ; they are to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light ; they have work to do for the Master, each one with his talent ; and the time for this is the short and shortened time of the life that now is.

Truly, there is that work of eternity. The state immediately after death may be rather one of rest, but the eternal state shall be one of active service—" His servants shall serve Him," serve Him with the sceptres of immortality, serve Him as His kings and priests for ever and ever. Yet there is a service to be done now that may not be done hereafter. The work of faith ; the working out of our own salvation ; the working for the salvation of others ; amid surrounding oppositions of the world, the flesh,

and the devil ; in weakness, and in weariness, and in danger by reason of our own still remaining sin ; against discouragements, and improbabilities, and creature impossibilities ; this, with its education and its discipline ; this, with its endurance as seeing Him who is invisible ; this, with its glory to God, is work for time and not for eternity. When once the tale of earthly years is told, we must let this work of faith alone for ever. Others of warmer devotion and more self-sacrificing zeal may be here, but we shall be gone. And if in that rest which remains for the people of God beyond the grave, until the last trumpet shall call them to the fulness of their inheritance ; if in that nearer presence of Jesus into which they enter the moment after death, any shadow could be supposed to fall upon the happy spirit, surely it would be the shadow of regret, at having done so little, and given so little, and said so little, and endured so little, for the dear Lord, on earth. There are no shadows there. Yet, it is not for nothing that we are exhorted to be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Herein is the Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and He will recognise and reward that fruitfulness. It is indeed the working of His own grace, and therefore there can be no earning, no meriting, no deserving the reward. But He giveth more grace as grace is faithfully used. And in that Day, "to him that hath shall be given;" to him that now rightly receives and uses grace shall be given the reward of grace, according to his reception and his use. The harvest shall be according to the sowing ; he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap also

plenteously. He whose pound shall have gained ten pounds, shall have authority over ten cities, and he whose pound shall have gained five pounds, shall have authority over five cities. In a word, it is the repeated teaching of Scripture, that (not indeed of merit, but of God's free favour), in the eternal kingdom, the stars that shall glitter in the crown of each of the redeemed, the place of each of its princes with reference to the King, the capacity of each for the joy of his Lord, the ability of each for the higher places of dominion, shall be according to the measure of his fidelity in service here.

Is any one asking "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?" Perhaps it must be answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He hath sent?" You have not yet made salvation your own, and cannot therefore work it out; you have not yet secured your own soul, and have that to think about before you think of the souls of others. Your immediate business is *to get yourself saved*. It is immediate, urgent, pressing. Oh, lay to heart the dreadful truth that if you have not personally, by faith, secured your interest in Christ, if you have not personally received the At-one-ment made by the Lord Jesus in His Cross and Passion, you are going forward to eternity with the "wrath of God abiding" on you (John iii. 36); you are turning from the great end of your being, which is your well-being for ever; you are without the "one thing needful," which is peace with God. And "the time is short"—you know not how short it may be—at any moment it may end. And no remorse,

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nor wishes, nor cries, will bring back the lost day of salvation when once the little shortened time is spent. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 20, 21).

A godly woman on her deathbed was asked by a friend, "Do you feel ready to die?" She replied, "*I hardly know what to say about feeling ready, but I have taken God at His Word, and I am not afraid to die.*" Are you afraid to die? Then take God at His Word, who assures you that He has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. Behold and believe on this Lamb of God, and, God's honour for it, you will have no reason to fear. There is no exception. If a man objects, "But there never was the like of me for a sinner," let him know that there never was the like of Christ for a Saviour.

But it is not enough not to be afraid to die. To a godly man who seemed somewhat depressed upon his deathbed, it was said, "Surely, you know that in Christ you need not be at all afraid to die." "Yes," he replied, "*and I am not afraid, but I am ashamed to die.*" Ashamed, he meant, as he thought of his poor returns for God's grace and mercy to him.

You, who through Divine mercy have found Christ, or rather been found of Him, for your soul's salvation, what are you doing for Him who lived and died for you? Ashamed in one sense we all must be, even of our best, and yet

St. John says, "Little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John ii. 28). Get closer then, to Him, speak more with Him, get more into the habit of bringing everything to Him, draw more largely and more confidently upon Him. And let the result of this appear in your growing holiness of life and conversation; let your faith be manifested as a faith which worketh by love. Never were there such opportunities for doing good as now, never so many doors open to Christian workers. And never surely, were the powers of evil more in earnest, perhaps, because Satan knoweth that his time is short. Be you in earnest too.

Verse 13.—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." See chapter i. 8. What is the connection? Why does the Lord thus abruptly introduce Himself here? Is it not to shew mercy for any one plunged into the depths of despair and ready to say, "My case is hopeless, my habit has become my character, and I cannot change it; nothing can alter me"? Let that man hear the loving reminder—"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." There is power to save to the uttermost within His eternal comprehensiveness. "Though your sins be as scarlet," they may be "as white as snow." And "where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded."

The case is hopeless, for aught that human power can do to relieve it. The man is holden by a band that no human arm can break. In one of our collects we speak of being "tied and bound with the chain of our sins." The ex-

pression is a strong one, but not too strong. Is there any chain stronger than the chain of sinful habit? There is one; the chain of God's eternal love. Let young Christians and fearful Christians remember it, who are asking, "Shall I ever hold out to the end?" But beside this, is there any chain so strong as that of a sinful habit? There are thousands who out of their own sad experience could readily supply the answer. Thousands who have said or are saying, "It seems just impossible to get quit of the sin that holds me," and are either sinking into despair, or into a fatal complacency, hoping that somehow or other they shall be saved at the last, their sin notwithstanding. But all the while, the Lord Jesus stands ready to make good His own name of Saviour. There is no chain that He cannot snap. There is no man so fast tied and bound by a sinful habit, but the Lord Jesus is able to loose that man and let him go. And He is set forth for the very purpose, to proclaim and give deliverance to the captives. *He is come down to deliver.* Do you want to be free? The question is not only for the man who is held by some gross sin of intemperance, or impurity, or such like; but also for the man whose conscience tells him of a worldliness, or an over-anxiety, or slothfulness in spiritual things, or a selfishness, or an evil temper, or anything else that keeps him back from realized peace with God, and hearty service of God, and a sure and certain hope for the world to come. Would you be free? Then just bring yourself, *chain and all*, to Christ, and see what He will do for you. You may go on trying what you can do for yourself, what man can do for you, until the end of your days, and you will die a slave.

But "if the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed."

Your future may be one of ceaseless and often painful conflict with the sin that once enslaved you. It may rise up ever and anon, at the instigation of Satan, to recover its old supremacy ; but you shall be able to sing "thanks be unto God that giveth the victory through Jesus Christ." You may have to endure no little hardness, to practice no little self-denial, to feel the pain as of cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. But "sin shall not have dominion over you" ever again—it shall die daily, and in your experience you shall prove the reason for the Saviour's name, who *saves his people from their sins.*

But are we not to be sorry for our sins, and shall we not suffer for them ? Yes, indeed ; it is impossible that a man should be a child of God and make light of his offences. He will deeply sorrow for them ; and he must, moreover, often suffer the natural consequences of sinning —though this, too, we may include in prayer that God would mercifully turn from us all those evils which we have most righteously deserved. But it is not for God's child to sorrow with the world's sorrow which worketh death, with a remorse and despair as if he had lost his salvation. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not ;" but if any man sin, let him remember the Cross again, and the continual advocacy of Him who died upon it. See your sin on Him and just trust Him who made atonement for it ; and then, willing to bear whatever God may see fit to send upon you, but without a misgiving or a doubt about His forgiveness, go forth to the work which God gives

you to do. In this sense, forget the sinful things which are behind, and press forward unto the things which are before. "It is across the failures of the present that brave men march to the triumphs of the future." You can do no good by brooding and crying long over the spilt water. You cannot gather it up again; you cannot undo what has been done, you cannot be as if you had never committed the sin—but "Be of good cheer, God for Christ's sake *hath* forgiven you. Nothing of all the guilt of the past shall ever rise up to condemn you. God Himself has blotted it out. Nor is this all, for God, who causeth all things to work together for good to them that love God—not to them that love sin, mark you—can and does include even sin. He can cause your recollections of lost opportunities to make you more faithful in those which remain, and your memory of transgressions to deepen your sense of the wonderful heart of God who pardoned you, and who loved you through them all.

Yes, and further still, as the farmer burns the noxious weeds, and then uses those burnt weeds in the cultivation of his field, so God can take burnt sins, sins which have been repented of, and upon which the sanctifying fire of His Holy Spirit has come down—God can take those very sins and use them to make your life a richer, nobler, higher life, a more fruitful and a more useful life than it would have been without them. God can do this, God has done it. Probably, it is always through pain and suffering and trial more than ordinary; but through these God brings us into a wealthier place, and then—

"There's a joy in our sadness we knew not in mirth,
There's a tone in our gladness that sounds not from
earth,

There's a peace in our twilight we felt not at morn,
There's a light in our evening unseen at the dawn,
There are wells of deep feeling which sorrow wrought
 up,
There's a comfort untasted till drunk from grief's cup,
There are stars in our sky only darkness reveals,
There's a knowledge of love by the wound which it
 heals,
And the hopes that beat high in our earlier years,
Knew nought of the joy thus baptized by our tears."

Verse 14.—The reading of the Revised version, following two of the best MSS. is "Blessed are they that *wash their robes, &c.*," and this harmonizes with the encouragement of the previous verse. There is no sin from which the blood of the Lamb cannot perfectly cleanse, and no sinner here for whom it is not available. If we accept the reading, "Blessed are they that keep His commandments," then the right to the tree of life must be the right not of merit, but graciously conferred upon those whose character is thus described, in contrast with those who are "without" (verse 15). We cannot have the title without the character, any more than we can have the inside of a garment without the outside. Justification and sanctification are inseparable, though they may be spoken of separately.

Verse 16.—The Lord Himself testifies to the truth of the Revelation, and calls Himself by titles which have their peculiar significance. He is the root and offspring of David: the Lord and Author of David, as God; the Son of David, according to the flesh (Matt. xxii. 42). And He is "The bright and morning star." How? It has been observed, that whenever Christ is spoken of with reference to David—a man of war from his youth—He is always Christ as the great omnipotent King, the mighty Conqueror, able

and ready to crush every adversary, to sweep away every opposing power. He hath, for example, "the key of David," so that when He openeth, no man shutteth; and when He shutteth, no man openeth (Rev. iii. 7). Again, it is as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David," that He "hath *prevailed* to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Rev. v. 5). It has further been observed, that the symbol of the *Star* also is used in connection with the exercise of power in destruction. You remember the famous prophecy of Balaam, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Numb. xxiv. 17. So, of the great future Antichrist, who is to "smite the people in wrath with a continual stroke, and to rule all nations in anger," it is said prophetically, "how art thou fallen from heaven, O *Lucifer*," day star, star of the morning. Is. xiv. 12. So again, in the promise in Rev. ii. 27, 28, "He shall rule all nations with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, and I will give him the morning star." When, therefore, the Lord says, "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star," using both the symbol of David and the symbol of the Star (and this at the very close of a book whose great subject is His own coming again in His glorious majesty), and presently adding the words, "Surely I come quickly," it seems that by the morning star—not yet the day, but the immediate forerunner of the day—He is intending Himself, not yet come, but about immediately to come, to smite the earth with the judgments which shall close this dispensation,

and bring in the Day of His own Second Advent.

Verse 17.—The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." The prayer seems to be addressed to the Lord Himself by the Spirit in the Bride, or rather, perhaps, by the Bride in the Spirit ; it is her cry of yearning and longing for the Bridegroom. Then, "Let him that heareth say, Come"—as if it were, "surely if you hear this glad news you will say, Come." And then the end of the verse is turned ; if the sinner cannot ask Christ to come, let him come to Christ himself. And how simple is the invitation, "Him that is athirst." But a man may say, "I'm not thirsty ;" then, "Whosoever will, let him come and take freely!" We are reminded of John vii. 37: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." See also John iv. 14.

Verses 18 and 19.—These verses contain the solemn appendix which God affixes to this Book in particular, but also to the whole Bible. It is a solemn warning to us not to take up one particular doctrine at the expense of another ; such partiality in handling divine truth, comes often very near to taking *from* God's Word. There is also the warning against *adding to* God's Word. Many of the movements of the present day, though right in their place, *may* lead to the being wise above what is written, or practically to adding to the written Word. God's word must be taken as it is. A prescription may be excellent, but by adding to its ingredients, its effects may be nullified ; and by omitting, what to the patient might seem an insignificant quantity of any prescribed drug, the effect may

be utterly changed. Results, for the time, if we be faithful to our trust, to God's pure Word without addition or subtraction, may be discouraging. But our duty is plain, to be faithful to the Word, as it is written ; and for results, to wait till that day in which God will manifest the worth of each man's work. Let it be added, with this warning before us what can we say of those who not only take from the words of the prophecy, but seem to take them all away, from themselves and others, by never reading them, and by teaching that it is wiser not to read ?

Verse 19.—*Christ's last word*—“Surely I come quickly.” Can we say “Amen” to that ? It is a test question for each of us. “I have seen all the vision, what is it to me ? Now, Lord, what is my hope ?” Can I say it is “that blessed hope,” my Lord's appearing in glory ? If a Christian only in creed or profession, I cannot. But every true heart must echo the Bridegroom's assurance, and respond with St. John in his earnest prayer—

EVEN SO ; COME LORD JESUS.

A D V E N T H Y M N.

“WHEN THE KING COMES BACK.”

“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of
restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the
mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”—
Acts iii. 21.

When the King comes back.

Tune—EDITH.

T. GRAHAM.

A musical score for two voices (Soprano and Alto) and piano. The score consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the beginning of the melody with a basso continuo line below. The second system begins with a piano dynamic. The third system features a piano dynamic 'rall.' above the staff. The fourth system concludes the piece. The vocal parts are in common time, 2/4 time, and 3/4 time, indicated by a change in the basso continuo line. The piano part includes basso continuo lines in each system.

“WHEN THE KING COMES BACK.”

WHEN the King comes back from the far-off land,
And the trumpet sounds to meet Him ;
Oh ! the joy that thrills through the raptured band
Of the saints, as they rise to greet Him.

When the morning breaks on the hills of time,
And the shadows all are fleeing ;
And the Bride awakes to the marriage chime,
And her faith is turned to seeing.

When the fight is o'er, and the victory won,
And the vanquished foe is flying ;
And the Captain calls us every one
To the crown of the Life undying.

When the curse rolls away as He comes to reign,
And the heavens and the earth adore Him,
Whose ransom He paid, and beholds them again
His own fair world before Him.

Oh ! hasten, Lord, that happy happy day,
And the kingdom of Thy glory ;
For our spirits burn as we muse on Thy return
In the sweet, sweet Gospel story.

Oh ! we long to see Thee face to face,
Where faith no longer aideth ;
Oh ! we long to behold Thy full beauty and grace,
Where the vision never fadeth.

Oh ! we long for the hour when Thy blood-bought
power,
Shall bring Thy full salvation ;
And the earth resound to her utmost bound
With the song of the new Creation.

All blessing, glory, and honour be,
And praise that ceaseth never,
To Him that sits upon the throne,
And to the Lamb for ever.

Amen.

T. G.

